

# Macau's martial artists clinch 1 gold, 1 silver at Asian Games

Armando Neves

The Wushu General Association of Macau announced in a statement yesterday that local martial artists clinched one gold and one silver on the second day of the Asian Games.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Asian Games are taking place from Saturday to October 4 in Aichi-Nagoya, western Japan. The Games will run for 16 days, featuring 43 sports.

According to the statement, Macau martial artist Kuong Chi Hin won a gold medal with 9.723 points in the Men's Changquan event of Wushu Taolu at the Games, which officially began yesterday morning.

He previously won a gold medal in the men's long spear competition at the Taolu World Cup (TWC), held by the International Wushu Federation in July, as well as a silver medal at the World Championships, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, in the same event, fellow Macau martial artist Song Chi Kuan clinched a silver medal with 9.720 points. Indonesian martial artist Siregar S.N. also scored 9.720 points but took the bronze medal due to a lower difficulty score.

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai sent a congratulatory letter to the Macau delegation yesterday. He stated that

in the Men's Changquan event, the athletes showed no fear of strong opponents and pressed forward with determination, carrying forward the Chinese sporting spirit and winning honour for Macau. He added that the achievements of Kuong and Song were the result of arduous daily training and tenacious effort, serving as a source of great pride for the people of Macau.

He expressed his hope that all Macau athletes would continue to maintain high morale, strive courageously to be the best, fully demonstrate a positive and enterprising spirit, successfully complete their mission, and win even greater honour for Macau.

The head of the Macau delegation, Pun Weng Kun, told reporters at the venue yesterday that he was delighted with the athletes' success. He noted that this is the third consecutive Asian Games at which Macau has won a gold medal, and the first time in Macau's history that both the gold and silver medals in the same event have been won by local athletes.

Besides demonstrating the athletes' hard work and dedication, Pun noted that this achievement serves as an inspiration, adding that he hopes the delegation will continue to strive for success in the remaining events. ■  
(More about Asian Games on p.14)



Macau martial arts gold medallist Kuong Chi Hin (right) and silver-medallist Song Chi Kuan pose yesterday during the Asian Games at Aichi Prefectural Budokan in Japan. — Photo courtesy of Wushu General Association of Macau

## Trump says he plans to form AI Force, appoint AI 'Czar'

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump said on Saturday that he is forming an "AI Force" and will announce an "AI Czar" in the near future.

In a post on his Truth Social account, Trump said he would not stand by and let the "decimation or destruction" of AI happen.

"We will not in any way hinder or stifle the Growth of this incredible Industry. Rather, we will cherish it, help it, and watch over it, as it grows! However, we will also be looking for BAD, and we can do

that, very easily, with our already existing Criminal and Civil Justice System," Trump said.

Trump also described AI as the next Industrial Revolution or Internet, and said it could possibly account for as much as 25 percent of US gross domestic product.

Trump did not provide details on the structure of the planned "AI Force" or the role of the "AI Czar."

The announcement comes amid growing debate in the United States over the rapid development of AI and its potential risks. — Xinhua

## Left Party wins Berlin election, far-right AfD takes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, exit polls show

BERLIN — Exit polls released yesterday showed the Left Party leading the state election in Germany's capital Berlin with 24.5 percent of the vote, while the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) took first place in the northeastern state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with 37.0 percent.

In Berlin, the AfD surged from 9.1 percent in the 2023 election to 16.0 percent, coming in third after the Left Party and the incumbent Christian

Democratic Union (CDU).

It is also the far-right party's best result ever in the capital.

The Social Democratic Party (SPD) took 35.5 percent of the vote in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, trailing the AfD. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's CDU suffered heavy losses in the state, gaining only 5.5 percent, less than half of its 2021 result. — Xinhua

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### China's 5-year plan to elevate electronic information manufacturing sector

As AI plays an increasingly significant role in reshaping the global industrial landscape, China has recently unveiled a plan to advance its electronic information manufacturing sector, a critical foundation for AI development, over the next five years. — Story on p. 7

### Iran says conveyed conditions to US for reopening Hormuz

Iran's top negotiator said yesterday that Tehran had conveyed to Washington through mediators its conditions for reopening the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which it has blockaded throughout the Middle East war. — Story on p. 10

### Brazilian police nab suspected serial killer disguised as woman

Brazilian police said on Friday they had captured a suspected serial killer linked to at least 16 deaths since May, who was arrested while disguised as a woman and carrying a baby. — Story on p. 12

# First Phase III trial of TCM drug launched in Macau

Sherwin Hng

Macau's first Phase III clinical trial of an innovative traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) drug, involving Tangning Tongluo Tablets, was launched at Kiang Wu Hospital yesterday, marking a milestone in local clinical research and the city's TCM industry, according to the project's launch ceremony held at the lecture hall of the Kiang Wu Hospital Dr. Henry Y.T. Fok Specialist Medical Centre.

Tangning Tongluo Tablets\* (糖寧通絡片), an innovative TCM drug designed to treat non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy\*\*, received the first clinical trial pre-licence for a new TCM drug from the Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau (ISAF) in August to conduct a Phase III clinical trial at Kiang Wu Hospital, the private hospital said in a statement.

The project represents the first TCM new drug clinical trial to receive Macau's advance approval, the first Phase III clinical trial of a Chinese patent medicine in Macau, and the first innovative TCM drug to undergo Phase III clinical trials simultaneously across mainland



Kiang Wu Hospital representatives and guests participate in yesterday's ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the official launch of the first Phase III trial of a TCM drug Macau at the lecture hall of the Kiang Wu Hospital Dr. Henry Y.T. Fok Specialist Medical Centre. GCP stands for "Good Clinical Practice".

– Photo: Sherwin Hng

China and Macau.

Lao Kuok Hou, a senior TCM physician at Kiang Wu Hospital and the project's principal investigator, said the drug helps alleviate vision problems caused by diabetic retinopathy. It has already completed about 360 cases in Phase III clinical trials in the Chinese mainland, with six cases set to be conducted in Macau.

Kiang Wu Charitable Association Vice President Lo Chio Kam said during her presentation that the launch represents an important breakthrough in the alignment of pharmaceutical regulatory rules and the mutual recognition of clinical data between Guangdong and Macau. She added that it provides a replicable pathway for the "Macau registration + Hengqin production"

development model.

Kiang Wu Hospital Deputy Director Xie Xuebin noted that the hospital's TCM Department has grown into a professional team of over 80 members, recording about 250,000 patient visits last year. The hospital currently utilises nine TCM hospital preparations from the mainland in clinical settings, with positive safety and efficacy records

and cumulative usage exceeding 80,000 units.

Fu Yongge, deputy director of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, said the zone will continue to deepen institutional mechanisms and regulatory alignment between Hengqin and Macau to facilitate the registration and launch of more innovative TCM drugs. ■

\*The name of the tablet translates to "Calming [blood] sugar and unblocking the micro-collaterals". The name directly reflects its therapeutic role in TCM – "Tang-Ning" addresses the root cause: lowering and stabilising blood glucose levels; "Tong-Luo" addresses the secondary microvascular complications: improving microcirculation and treating conditions like diabetic retinopathy, neuropathy, and diabetic foot ulcers. – Gemini

\*\* Non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy (NPDR) is the early to intermediate stage of diabetic retinopathy, characterised by damage to the small blood vessels in the retina caused by prolonged high blood sugar. – Gemini

## Macau's first national security trial ends, date of sentencing still to be announced

Staff Reporter

Macau's Criminal Chamber of the Lower Court (TJB) of the Court of First Instance (TPI) said in a statement on Friday that it concluded earlier that day the hearing of the trial concerning national security related to defendant Au Kam San and will set a date for the reading of the sentence.

As announced by the Lower Court earlier this month, the trial needed to be held behind closed doors "in order to ensure that no prejudice is caused to the interests of national security".

This has been the first national security trial since the establishment of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) on December 20, 1999.

Au was a directly elected member of Macau's Legislative Assembly (AL) between 2001 and 2021.

In July 2025, Au was arrested

by the Judiciary Police (PJ) for alleged collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security, a crime under the revised Macau National Security Law. He has been remanded in custody since his arrest.

Au, a teacher by profession, was born in Macau in April 1957.

According to local media reports, Au was defended by a court-appointed lawyer approved by the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the MSAR.

He faces up to 30 years' imprisonment – the maximum allowed by the Macau Penal Code, which prohibits life sentences, indefinite imprisonment, and capital punishment.

Macau's Court of First Instance comprises two separate courts of law, the Lower Court and the Administrative Court (TA).

Macau's judicial system is largely based on that of Portugal. ■

## Mainlander nabbed for attempted murder after HK\$15,000 debt row: police

Sherwin Hng

A mainland Chinese man was arrested for attacking his friend with a kitchen knife after failing to recover a HK\$15,000 gambling loan, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a special press conference on Friday at their Zape headquarters.

The suspect, surnamed Mo, aged 36, claimed to be unemployed and had overstayed in Macau for about a year.

According to Lei, police were notified by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) at about 2:38 a.m. on Thursday that a mainland Chinese male had been injured in a knife attack at a restaurant on Avenida de Lopo Sarmiento de Carvalho (賈羅布大馬路).

The investigation revealed that Mo and the victim had met at the restaurant in August. The victim subsequently borrowed HK\$15,000 from Mo for gambling, promising to give him a "gratuity" if he won. However, the victim lost the entire amount and was unable to repay the debt.

Lei also said the two men met at a restaurant on Rua de Pequim in Zape on the night of September 16 to discuss repayment. After failing to recover the money, Mo later went to another restaurant on Avenida de Lopo Sarmiento de Carvalho at about 1:00 a.m. the following day, where he again demanded repayment.

Mo allegedly became angry after the victim refused to repay him and appeared dismissive. He then entered the restaurant's kitchen, grabbed a kitchen knife, and repeatedly attacked the

victim's head and upper body at least 10 times.

The victim used a wooden chair to fend off the attack but sustained multiple injuries. He was taken to the public Conde S. Januário Hospital Centre for treatment.

The victim suffered multiple injuries to his head, face, and torso, while the middle section of his right little finger sustained a comminuted fracture. According to Gemini, a comminuted fracture is a medical term for a bone that has broken into three or more fragments.

He is expected to require about three months to recover.

According to Lei, police identified Mo as the suspect and arrested him at about 7:00 a.m. on Thursday at a spa in Nape.

During the operation, officers seized the suspected weapon: a kitchen knife with an 18-centimetre blade. Lei said there were strong indications that Mo had deliberately targeted the victim's vital areas, indicating an intention to kill him.

Mo was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of attempted murder, possession or use of prohibited weapons, and loan sharking. His overstaying case will be handled separately.

Lei added that there was currently no evidence that Mo had engaged in other illegal activities during his period of overstaying, but police will continue to investigate. ■



The hooded murder suspect is escorted by Judiciary Police (PJ) officers on Saturday from the PJ headquarters in Zape to a PJ vehicle en route to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP).

– Photo: MPDG

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MACAU POST

### Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.  
A FEW SHOWERS.  
A FEW THUNDERSTORMS AT FIRST.  
FORCE 2 TO 3 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.  
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 70% AND 98%.



25°C~30°C

Source: SMG

## Int'l manga exhibition brings global artists

**Khalel Vallo**

The International Manga Artists' Exhibition Macau 2026 opened on Friday at the Activity Room of Flower City Park in Taipa, bringing together more than 30 works by comic artists from Macau, mainland China and overseas.

Manga is an umbrella term for a wide variety of comic books and graphic novels originally created and published in Japan.

Organised by the Association of Promoting Macau Comics and

Animation Cultural Exchange (APMCACE) and sponsored by the Cultural Development Fund (FDC), the exhibition runs until next Tuesday.

The exhibition features works by artists including Chen Wei from the Chinese mainland, Alexis Bacci from France, Japan-based Misu Yamaneko, Hiroshi Kanatani from Japan, and Hong Kong comic artist Leung Wai Ka.

During a speaking session at the China Dragon Hotel on Avenida da Praia Grande yesterday, Bacci

demonstrated his techniques and introduced his recent work "Possessions", which he said made him think of his father. Chen discussed incorporating AI into his creative process, suggesting that AI should serve as an assistant rather than dominate the work.

Leung introduced his new book "Drawing Spirit", which follows a young person seeking to overcome a series of difficult experiences. The project was supported by the Hong Kong Comics Supporting Programme (HKCSP) and was created with his son, who wrote the script while Leung served as illustrator.

The exhibition aims to provide opportunities for local and international comic artists to exchange creative experiences and techniques, while giving local and young creators a platform to present their work, according to a statement by the organisers yesterday. The statement said that the initiative also seeks to promote Macau as a platform for international cultural exchange and encourage local artists to explore new ideas and technologies. ■

Stay tuned for an upcoming Page 4.



Chen Wei (third from left), Leung Wai Ka (fourth from right), and Alexis Bacci (third from right) pose with other guests during yesterday's International Manga Artists' Exhibition Macau 2026 sharing session at China Dragon Hotel in Central D.

— Photo: Khalel Vallo

## Morpheus garners 3 MICHELIN Keys, Banyan Tree Macau moves up to 2 Keys

**Rui Pastorin**

The MICHELIN Guide unveiled the 2026 MICHELIN Key selection on Friday, with City of Dreams (COD)-Morpheus, Macau, promoted from Two to Three MICHELIN Keys, the highest distinction, while Banyan Tree Macau at Galaxy Macau was moved up from One to Two MICHELIN Keys.

The MICHELIN Keys is the hotel distinction equivalent to the MICHELIN Star for restaurants, according to a Friday MICHELIN Guide statement.

One MICHELIN Key denotes "A very special stay", while Two and Three respectively mean "An exceptional stay" and "An extraordinary stay", the statement said.

This year marked the second year that Hong Kong and Macau

are joining the list, with a total of 19 properties from both regions garnering recognition. This particularly marks Macau's first Three MICHELIN Key hotel.

Macau saw a total of nine properties awarded with MICHELIN Keys. Aside from the newly promoted properties, the other seven are as follows: Grand Lisboa Palace (GLP), Palazzo Versace Macau, and The Karl Lagerfeld were awarded Two MICHELIN Keys; while the Four Seasons Hotel Macau, The Londoner Macao, The Ritz-Carlton Macau, and The St. Regis Macau earned One MICHELIN Key.

Moreover, the statement highlighted that the 2026 selection "introduces MICHELIN Keys in 10 new destinations for the first time: Armenia, Benin, Botswana, Kazakhstan,

Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Myanmar, Rwanda, Slovakia, and Zimbabwe".

The statement added that the guide's Global Keys selection has a total of 2,832 MICHELIN Key hotels, with 155 holding Three Keys, 657 holding Two Keys and 2,020 holding One Key. ■



This image provided by the MICHELIN Guide on Friday shows the MICHELIN Key.

## 'Sign the Music' gathers 400 attendees, over 120 performers

**Rui Pastorin**

The beauty and significance of sign language were promoted through performances at yesterday's "Sign the Music" event at the Saint Paul School auditorium, which saw around 400 attendees and over 120 performers from teams from both Macau and the Chinese mainland.

The event, organised by the Macau Deaf Association (MDA) with venue support from the well-known school, was held in celebration of both the United Nations' "International Day of Sign Languages", which is designated on September 23, and the International Week of Deaf People that takes place from September 21 to 27.

All events, including yesterday's performances, was held in line with this year's theme "Declaring deaf people's human rights".

Supported by 11 entities, "Sign the Music" saw attendees treated to 13 sign language performances accompanied by music, in a show of lights and colourfully dynamic music videos under a cheerful atmosphere. The performers, according to information from the organisers, also included those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Aside from performances, the event also saw the launch of the co-created theme song with the Macau Association of Composers, Authors & Publishers (MACA),

along with its music video. Game booths and photo spots were also set up outside the venue for participants.

Meanwhile, according to yesterday's statement by the association, which turns 32 this year, sign language goes beyond communication, being "a cultural vessel and identity symbol for the Deaf community", while also pointing out the group's efforts such as strengthening educational resources, promoting sign language, and the hosting inclusive events.

"We hope the public will not only learn sign language but also actively use this language of the Deaf community", the group said. ■

## Macau visitor arrivals rise 6.1 pct to record 4.4 million in August



Tourists and locals walk through Macau's main square, Largo do Senado, on Friday. The square has been festively decorated for this week's Mid-Autumn Festival, colloquially also known as the Mooncake Festival.

— Photo: Carl Leong

**Staff Reporter**

Macau's visitor arrivals increased by 6.1 percent year-on-year to 4.478 million last month, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) announced on Friday.

According to the bureau's times series database, last month's number of visitor arrivals was a monthly record. The previous record stood at 4.219 million in August last year.

Traditionally, August is the peak school holiday travel season in mainland China.

According to a DSEC statement, same-day visitors (2.853 million) rose by 11.7 percent year-on-year while overnight visitors (1.625 million) dropped by 2.4 percent.

Visitors' average length of stay shortened by 0.1 day year-on-year to 1.0 day, with that of overnight visitors (2.3 days, or 55 hours and 12 minutes) remaining unchanged.

On average, Macau recorded 144,454 visitor arrivals a day in August.

Visitors from the Chinese mainland increased by 9.3 percent year-on-year to 3,561 million in August, with those travelling under the Individual Visit Scheme (2.019 million) rising by 12.7 percent. Visitors from China's Taiwan region (101,282) went up by 13.7 percent year-on-year, while those from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (643,445) dropped by 5.6 percent.

Mainland Chinese accounted for

79.5 percent of the total number of visitor arrivals in August.

International visitors totalled 171,679 in August, down by 9.8 percent year-on-year. Visitors from the Philippines (31,282) and Indonesia (11,106) fell by 18.5 percent and 16.9 percent respectively, while those from Malaysia (8,161) rose by 2.1 percent. Visitors from India (6,430) dropped by 17.6 percent year-on-year.

Foreign nationals accounted for 3.8 percent of all visitor arrivals in August.

Visitors from South Korea (30,738) and Japan (11,464) decreased by 12.6 percent and 31.1 percent respectively. Visitors from the US (11,713) dipped by 0.4 percent year-on-year.

In the first eight months of the year, visitor arrivals rose by 7.7 percent year-on-year to 28.964 million; same-day visitors (17.850 million) grew by 13.6 percent while overnight visitors (1.114 million) dropped by 0.6 percent.

Foreign visitors totalled 1.768 million in the first eight months, up by 3.4 percent year-on-year.

Tourism continues to be Macau's primary source of revenue. Its gaming industry is the largest in the world. Macau's main attractions include its casinos, UNESCO World Heritage sites, diverse culinary scene, and retail sectors — particularly its jewellery shops and pharmacies. ■



Children deliver a performance during yesterday's "Sign the Music" event at Saint Paul School.

— Photo: Rui Pastorin



Photos taken in Shanxi by the Post's Armindo Neves and Maria Cheang Ut Meng during their visit to the nation's northern province between September 14 and 18.

# Shanxi: A Living Fossil of Central Plains History

## Primary revolution cradle & anti-Japanese key base

### Armindo Neves in Shanxi

Two members of the *Post* team completed on Friday a five-day visit to Shanxi Province in Northern China as part of a Portuguese- and English-language media delegation organised by the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR.

The itinerary spanned two key cities – Taiyuan, the provincial capital, and Datong, one of China's nine ancient capitals – providing deep insights into the region's profound history and religious culture.

Shanxi ("West of the Mountains") is widely renowned as "China's premier province for ancient architecture." Boasting a history spanning 5,000 years, it holds 54,000 immovable cultural relics, over 28,000 ancient structures, more than 12,000 Tang Dynasty painted sculptures, over 50,000 square metres of murals, and 531 major national-level historical sites – ranking first among all Chinese provinces.

Covering 6,988 square kilometres with a permanent population of 5.5 million, Taiyuan sits in the central part of the province. Abbreviated as "Bing" (并 – "Parallel") and historically known as Bingzhou, Jinyang, and Longcheng (龙城 – "Dragon City"), it serves as Shanxi's political, economic, cultural, and transport hub, with a city-building history extending back more than 2,500 years to the late Spring and Autumn period. It also remains a vital industrial base specialising in steel, coal, and machinery manufacturing.

While in Taiyuan, the delegation visited:

**Zhonglou ("Belltower Street"):** A bustling thoroughfare in the old city known for local cuisine and street culture.

**Shanxi Museum:** A major repository highlighting Jin culture, bronzeware, and regional Buddhist art. Its name stems from the ancient State of Jin (晋国) during the Western Zhou Dynasty and the Spring and Autumn period (1046–476 BCE), as well as the official one-character abbreviation for Shanxi today (晋).

**Jinci Temple ("Ancestral Temple of Jin"):** A classical ancestral temple and garden complex built to commemorate Tang Shuyu, the founding prince of the State of Jin.

Located in northern Shanxi, Datong (大同 – "Great Unity") – formerly Pingcheng and Yunzhong – features more than 2,300 years of history. As Shanxi's second-largest city and a major coal hub, it earned the nickname "Coal Capital."

The delegation explored several world-renowned heritage sites across the region:

**Yungang ("Cloud Ridge") Grottoes:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of China's four major grotto groups. Excavated during the Northern Wei Dynasty, its massive Buddhist statues blend Chinese and Western artistic styles. The site drew nearly five million visitors last year.

**The Ancient City of Datong:** A historic district enclosed by well-preserved Ming Dynasty city walls, housing landmarks such as Huayan ("Flower Garland") Temple, Shanhua ("Good Transformation") Temple, the Nine-Dragon Wall, and the Drum Tower.

**The Hanging ("Hanging Void") Temple:** Built onto sheer cliffs in the Jinlong ("Golden Dragon") Gorge of Mount Heng ("Permanent Mountain"), this architectural wonder uniquely integrates Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

**Yingxian Wooden Pagoda (应县木塔 – "Wooden Pagoda of Ying County):** Built entirely of timber without nails, it stands as one of the world's tallest and oldest surviving wooden pagodas, having stood firm for over a millennium.

### CPC history in Datong region

Besides witnessing the rise and fall of ancient civilisations, Shanxi also bears witness to the establishment of Communist Party of China (CPC) organisations in the Datong region. While visiting the Datong Red Memory Museum, we learnt that in the early days of the Party's founding, it placed considerable importance on the student and workers' movements and the development of Party organisations in the Datong area. The region's first Party branch – the Chinese Communist Party Datong Railway Workers' Branch – was established there, bringing the region's revolutionary movement into a new phase.

### Foreign friend Norman Bethune in Shanxi

Meanwhile, Shanxi also bore witness to the deeds of Dr Henry Norman Bethune (白求恩-1890-1939), an internationalist Communist fighter on the Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei anti-Japanese front line. He established mobile medical teams and set up operating tables near the front line to rescue large numbers of wounded soldiers, while training medical staff and refining blood transfusion methods and surgical equipment. In 1939, he died in the line of duty from an infection contracted during surgery. Chairman Mao Zedong wrote an essay in his memory, making him a household name across China as an internationalist fighter.

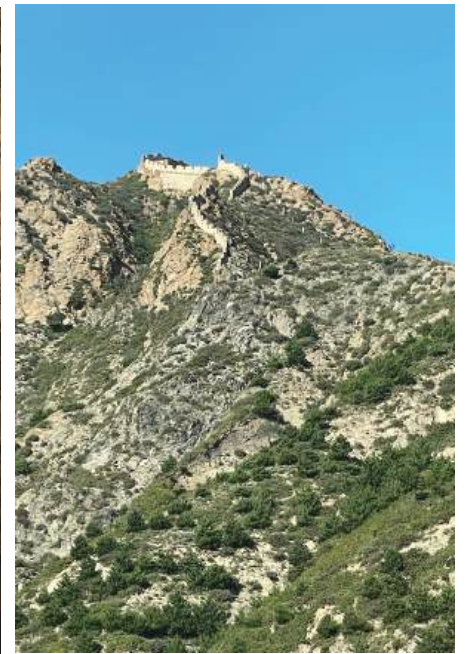
Reflecting on the trip, delegation leader Carlos Morais José, former director of local Portuguese-language daily *Hoje Macau*, noted that the visit provided a deeper appreciation of Shanxi as one of the cradles of Chinese civilisation. He highlighted how the region seamlessly blends agrarian and nomadic cultures, embodying China's historically inclusive character.

He emphasised that Macau and Shanxi should continue to expand media cooperation and exchange, expressing hope that



telling Shanxi's rich history to those back in Macau will foster local residents' understanding of national identity and cultural heritage.

Yin Rutao, deputy-general of the Department of Publicity and Culture of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the MSAR, was the most senior official of the Liaison Office on the five-day trip.



# Govt vows to enhance Macau's cybersecurity resilience

**Tony Wong**

A one-day sub-forum for this year's annual China Cybersecurity Week has been hosted in Macau, during which Judiciary Police (PJ) Director Sit Chong Meng pledged the Macau government's commitment to improving compliance guidelines for AI security and data security, as well as enhancing the cybersecurity resilience of Macau's civil society.

The 2026 China Cybersecurity Week was held across the country between Monday last week and yesterday. Main activities, including the opening ceremony on Monday last week, were held in Jinan, the capital of Shandong Province. This year's event was themed "Cybersecurity for the People, Cybersecurity by the People – Safeguarding the Intelligent Era".

The sub-forum in Macau, which was open to the media, held at the Macao Science Centre (MSC) on Friday, was attended by about 400 people, including officials, experts, and industry representatives in the cybersecurity field from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and Macau.

The sub-forum was organised by the local government's Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre – which comprises officials from the Judiciary Police, the Public Administration and Civil Service

Bureau (SAFP), and the Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT).

In his speech, Sit said that the world is currently experiencing a massive wave of technological revolution and industrial transformation, where emerging technologies such as AI, big data, and cloud computing are fully penetrating all socioeconomic areas. While providing powerful momentum for governance innovation, industrial upgrading, and public services, they also give rise to new security challenges like data security, privacy protection, and technology misuse, Sit said.

The rapid development of AI technology has rendered criminal tactics increasingly intelligent and automated, Sit said, adding that the speed of hacker intrusions is unprecedented, their stealthiness has increased significantly, new fraudulent schemes are more deceptive, and the damage caused by data theft and cyberattacks has escalated substantially.

Sit said that these risks threaten not only social order and the public interest in Macau, but also pose a direct threat to national security.

Sit said that faced with a severe cybersecurity landscape and emerging risks, the operators of the city's various major facilities – while developing and



Judiciary Police (PJ) Director Sit Chong Meng addresses Friday's sub-forum at the Macao Science Centre (MSC) for the 2026 China Cybersecurity Week. – Photo: PJ

applying emerging technologies for their operations – must draw up regulations on security governance, with the aim of guiding technology towards good ends and ensuring that technological development always benefits civil society.

Sit pointed out that Macau's 3<sup>rd</sup> Five-Year Plan outlines comprehensive planning for safeguarding cybersecurity across various aspects such as system improvements, capacity building, and talent cultivation. Sit said that the local government will place a strong emphasis on improving compliance guidelines for cutting-edge fields such as AI security and data security, strengthening the development of Macau's cybersecurity talent

system, and systematically enhancing the cybersecurity resilience of Macau's civil society.

The Macau government released the final version of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Five-Year Plan last month.

Sit also underlined that the Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre will continue to deepen exchanges and cooperation in cybersecurity with its counterparts in Guangdong and Hong Kong. Guided by the regional strategic initiative to build a digital Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), the centre will adopt a holistic and systematic mindset to jointly safeguard the GBA's cybersecurity defences, constructing a solid, reliable security foundation to empower

industrial transformation and upgrades through digital intelligence and foster new quality productive forces in the digital economy.

Macau's Cybersecurity Law was enacted in 2019. According to the law, Macau's cybersecurity system comprises three parts: (1) the Cybersecurity Commission, (2) the Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre, and (3) various government entities supervising the various operators of the city's "critical infrastructure" – officially known as Cybersecurity Supervisory Entities.

The Cybersecurity Commission, headed by the Chief Executive, is tasked with strategic planning and decision-making for Macau's cybersecurity while overseeing the operations of the Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre and the Cybersecurity Supervisory Entities.

According to the Cybersecurity Law, "critical infrastructure" refers to the assets, information networks, and computer systems important to the normal functioning of civil society whose disruption, destruction, data leakage, suspension of operation, or significant decrease in operational performance is likely to cause serious harm to public well-being, public safety, public order, or other important matters of public interest. ■

## First phase of Taipa Remembrance Garden opens

**Khalel Vallo**

The first phase of the "Remembrance Garden" at Taipa Sa Kong Municipal Cemetery comes into use today, providing more than 5,000 columbaria for public application, according to a statement by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) on Friday.

The statement said that the bureau has expanded the columbarium\* facility at the graveyard in phases to meet community needs and improve public burial facilities.

Located between the cemetery's columbarium and Buddhist cemetery, officially called United Chinese Cemetery, the Remembrance Garden has its entrance and exit on Estrada da Ponta da Cabrita in Taipa, the statement noted, adding that the facility provides a quiet resting place and includes joss paper-burning furnaces, toilets and other ancillary facilities.

According to the statement, the first phase covers the first to seventh floors of the columbarium. The initial right of use for a columbarium niche is 25 years, after which it can be renewed for 10 years each time, the statement added.

Class A columbarium niches cost 2,500 patacas, while Class B niches cost 1,500 patacas, the statement underlined. Applicants moving ashes from outside a public cemetery must also apply for a licence to move remains, bone remains or ashes to a cemetery, which costs 100 patacas, the statement said, adding that stamp duty is charged at 10 percent of the application fee.

Applications and related formalities are available through the bureau's cemetery services (<https://www.iam.gov.mo/e/scope-grave/scope>), while members of the public can also visit the bureau's Integrated Services Centres, Public Services Centres or the Service Office at the Our Lady Mercy Cemetery for assistance, the statement noted, adding that enquiries can be made by calling 2833 7676. ■

*\*A columbarium is a structure for the respectful storage of urns containing cremated remains, typically featuring rows of small niches in a wall or building. The word comes directly from the Latin columbarium, meaning "dovecote", which is derived from columba, meaning "dove" or "pigeon". The term was applied to Roman burial structures because the small arched niches that held funeral urns closely resembled the small compartments built for doves in a dovecot. – DeepSeek*

## Sam vows cooperation with Hebei for developing Hengqin & Xiong'an New Area

**Tony Wong**

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has met with Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Hebei Provincial Committee Chairman Zhang Guohua, who is also the director of the Xiong'an New Area's management committee, where the two sides exchanged views on the joint development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and the Xiong'an New Area.

According to a statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) on Friday, the meeting was held at Government Headquarters on Wednesday last week.

Xiong'an New Area is a state-level new area in Hebei Province. The new area is located about 100 kilometres southwest of central Beijing.

Welcoming Zhang and his delegation to Macau, Sam stressed that his government is advancing the implementation of Macau's 3<sup>rd</sup> Five-Year Plan in close alignment with the nation's 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan. Sam underlined the Macau government's commitment to advancing the high-quality development of Hengqin, participating in the coordinated development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), and better integrating Macau's development into the nation's overall development.

Sam said that advancing the integrated development of Macau and Hengqin and the construction of Macau's four future large-scale projects serve as key drivers for solidly promoting Macau's appropriate economic diversification.

Sam said that the Macau



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (right) meets with CPPCC Hebei Provincial Committee Chairman and Xiong'an New Area Director Zhang Guohua at Government Headquarters on Wednesday. – Photo: GCS

government and the Xiong'an New Area's management committee have maintained close ties for many years. Building on this solid foundation, Sam said, both sides can further share successful experiences in industrial zone development for mutual progress. In the future, pragmatic cooperation can also be deepened in areas such as nurturing and attracting talent and developing the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) industry, jointly driving the continuous development of both Hengqin and the Xiong'an New Area.

According to the GCS statement, Zhang expressed his gratitude to the Macau government for supporting the development of Hebei Province and the Xiong'an New Area. Zhang noted that Hebei Province is vigorously advancing industrial structural adjustments while

firmly anchoring itself to the nation's strategic positioning for the Xiong'an New Area.

Zhang said that his visit to Macau aimed to learn from Macau's successful development experience and to jointly discuss directions for future collaboration, expecting to work together to promote economic diversification in Hebei and Macau.

Zhang highlighted that in recent years, the Xiong'an New Area has fully driven sci-tech innovation, vigorously developing industries such as satellite internet, digital intelligence, AI, and new materials R&D. The new area has also been attracting talent from Beijing and Tianjin to settle and develop there, transforming itself into a new engine leading high-quality development across the entire province. ■

# TCM supports China's crewed space missions: experts

## Analysis

**TIANJIN** — Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has played a significant role in supporting China's crewed space missions over the past decade and could offer comprehensive health protection for astronauts in the future, experts said at an aerospace medical engineering conference in Tianjin Municipality in north China.

The conference, held over the weekend, brought together experts and scholars from fields including aerospace medicine, human factors engineering and life sciences to discuss the medical engineering challenges of future deep space exploration.

Zhang Boli, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a renowned TCM master, said the unique conditions

of spaceflight — where astronauts face altered breathing, digestion and mobility in microgravity — make TCM's holistic approach particularly well-suited for maintaining crew health.

"TCM uses a comprehensive approach to regulate the body, such as adjusting qi, or vital energy, and blood imbalances with herbal medicine and using acupuncture to improve unstable heart rates, indigestion and poor sleep," Zhang said.

Wu Bin, an expert at the Astronaut Center of China, highlighted specific applications of TCM in space. Acupuncture can help regulate sleep and prevent muscle atrophy, while Chinese patent medicines can improve cardiovascular function and help astronauts adapt to microgravity.

"In the future, we will continue to use the national space laboratory as a unique platform to conduct TCM research — not only to address health protection for low-Earth orbit flights, but also to seek TCM technologies and methods for medical challenges in crewed deep space exploration," Wu said.

Astronaut Zhang Lu, who has flown on both the Shenzhou-15 and Shenzhou-21 missions, said TCM has been closely linked to mission success. During the Shenzhou-21 mission, which lasted nearly seven months in orbit, the crew used TCM equipment to stimulate nerves and muscles in the mid-to-late stages of flight to counter muscle atrophy, he said.

The space station is stocked with TCM medicines, including the space heart-

nourishing pills and functional drinks that help with radiation protection and immune support, Zhang Lu added.

Zhang Boli noted that research shows TCM approaches can also counter orthostatic intolerance, cardiovascular dysfunction and space motion sickness, enriching the toolkit for astronaut health protection from physical and mental conditioning to disease prevention.

China's space station, Tiangong, which means Heavenly Palace, has now entered an era of long-term human habitation. One member of the Shenzhou-23 crew will conduct a one-year in-orbit stay, while the country's 2030 crewed Moon landing mission is advancing steadily.

— Xinhua

## Global mayors explore sustainable development prospects at Wuhan meeting



Foreign guests experience a ride on the suspended monorail line during the 2026 Global Mayors Dialogue in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province, on Saturday. — Xinhua

**WUHAN** — More than 80 city leaders and representatives from over 20 countries, along with heads of international organizations, have gathered in Wuhan, Hubei Province, central China, to discuss shared urban challenges and explore pathways to sustainable development at the four-day 2026 World Mayors Dialogue.

Concluding today, under the theme "River City: Shared Resonance, Shared Growth," the event focuses on how technological innovation, industrial cooperation and cultural exchanges can advance urban development and improve people's lives.

Shaukat Ali, Lord Mayor of Manchester, said he was impressed by Wuhan's efforts in developing low-carbon industries and advanced manufacturing, noting that Manchester and Wuhan have jointly established the UK-China Clean Energy Forum to harness the two cities' shared industrial and technological strengths for eco-friendly development.

Manchester and Wuhan became sister cities in 1986 because of shared industrial origins, leading educational institutions, and a shared appetite for economic transformation. As the cities have grown and evolved, the partnership continues to pioneer multi-level exchanges and developmental cooperation between the UK and China, Ali said.

The dialogue comes as Wuhan continues to pursue greener urban development while transforming its traditional industrial base.

Located at the confluence of the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers, Wuhan is home to 166 lakes and 165 rivers. Once a major industrial center known for steel and automobile manufacturing, the city has in recent years stepped up efforts to improve its environment and promote greener industrial development.

As part of its urban renewal efforts, Wuhan has transformed small plots of unused or underused land into "pocket parks," bringing green space closer to residents. By the end of May, the city had built 788 such parks.

Water quality in Wuhan's sections of the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers has remained at Grade II, the second-highest level in China's five-tier system, for six consecutive years.

The city also showcased its experience to international participants through visits to its suspended rail transit system, a smart home appliance factory, and a Yangtze finless porpoise breeding and conservation center, offering a closer look at its infrastructure, technological innovation, and ecological protection efforts.

"Our visits have given us different perspectives on how technological innovation and industrial development are reshaping cities and their economies," said Jordi Vaquer, secretary general of Metropolis. "We have also been reminded that innovation and development must coexist with the protection of natural systems."

Vaquer said cities play an important role in keeping international cooperation channels open, as urban challenges transcend national borders.

"None of us can address them entirely alone," he said.

Beyond Wuhan's transformation experiences, the dialogue also comes as China places greater emphasis on sustainable urban development.

This year marks the start of China's 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030). The outline calls for a shift in the approach to urban development and for building cities that are more innovative, livable, beautiful, resilient, culturally vibrant and smart. — Xinhua

## China's power use surge spotlights industrial upgrading, emerging-sector momentum

### Analysis

**BEIJING** — China's electricity consumption exceeded 1 trillion kilowatt-hours (kWh) again in August, with record peak load and much faster power demand growth in high-tech manufacturing and new-economy services, underscoring the economy's ongoing structural transformation.

Power use totaled 1.0332 trillion kWh in August, rising 1.7 percent year on year, the National Energy Administration (NEA) data showed on Sunday. Electricity load hit a record high of 1.56 billion kilowatts, 49.69 million kilowatts above the previous year's maximum, and exceeded that level on seven days in total during the month.

A breakdown of the August data revealed that power consumed by the primary industry rose 2.7 percent year on year to 16.9 billion kWh, while power consumed by the secondary industry increased 2.4 percent to 612.4 billion kWh. Power use by the tertiary industry reached 215.5 billion kWh, up 5.1 percent year on year.

"The secondary and tertiary industries are the main engines of electricity consumption growth," said Wu Liqiang, an official with the China Electricity Council.

"Within manufacturing, the pattern of 'new sectors rising and old sectors declining' continued. High-tech and equipment manufacturing maintained rapid growth, while consumer goods manufacturing was the second-largest positive contributor to manufacturing electricity demand after high-tech and equipment manufacturing."

Notably, electricity consumption by the high-tech and equipment manufacturing sector reached 122.2 billion kWh in August, an increase of 7.2 percent. Computer and communications equipment, automobile manufacturing, general equipment manufacturing, special equipment manufacturing and electrical machinery manufacturing saw power use rise 7.5 percent, 7.6 percent, 7.6 percent, 8.2 percent and 12.3 percent, respectively.

Within automobile manufacturing, power consumption for new energy vehicle (NEV) production jumped 22.2 percent year on year.

Wu added that electricity consumption in new business formats has become an

important source of incremental demand for the tertiary industry and the economy as a whole.

The charging and battery swapping service sector and internet data services reported rapid growth in electricity consumption in August, rising 51.2 percent and 37.9 percent, to 17.2 billion and 10.2 billion kWh, respectively.

In contrast, residential electricity consumption dropped by 4 percent year-on-year to 188.3 billion kWh in August, as more frequent typhoons and heavier rainfall compared to last year significantly reduced air-conditioning demand.

In the first eight months of the year, China's total power use reached 7.17 trillion kWh, up 4.3 percent year on year, the NEA said. Power use by the primary, secondary and tertiary industries rose 3.3 percent, 4.4 percent and 7.1 percent, to 104.6 billion kWh, 4.53 trillion kWh and 1.43 trillion kWh, respectively.

During this period, high-tech and equipment manufacturing electricity consumption climbed 9.3 percent to 845.1 billion kWh. Electricity use by charging and battery swapping services and internet data services grew 55.1 percent to 114.7 billion kWh and 42.5 percent to 69.5 billion kWh, respectively. Residential power use rose 0.3 percent to 1.11 trillion kWh.

In recent years, China has made major strides in terms of its power infrastructure, helping ensure a stable electricity supply during peak periods and effectively supporting economic and social development as well as meeting people's basic needs, the National Development and Reform Commission said in July.

According to an annual development report of China's electric power industry released by the China Electricity Council in July, total electricity consumption nationwide in 2026 is expected to increase by 5 percent to 6 percent year on year.

The total newly installed power generation capacity for the year is estimated at approximately 400 million kilowatts, with new energy sources continuing to be the main contributors to the added capacity. The increase in conventional power sources is expected to be around 100 million kilowatts, roughly matching the growth in peak load, the report added. — Xinhua

## China to step up proactive support for promising SMEs

BEIJING – China will accelerate efforts to identify and nurture promising small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), shifting from waiting for companies to apply for support to proactively seeking out firms with strong growth potential, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) said yesterday.

The ministry will improve mechanisms to foster SMEs that use specialized and sophisticated technologies to produce novel and unique products, and strengthen the identification of promising start-ups, particularly companies focused on technological innovation and product development.

The ministry made the promise at a roundtable with SMEs yesterday, where participants discussed ways to improve the proactive identification mechanism and provide more targeted services to companies.

A ministry official said China will continue to improve its legal and policy framework, enterprise cultivation programs, and business support services to promote SMEs' high-quality development.

Companies are also encouraged to pursue specialized and innovative development, increase research and development investment, and seek breakthroughs in key and core technologies.

The official urged SMEs to focus on their core businesses, improve products and production processes, and strengthen services, while addressing bottlenecks and weak links in industrial and supply chains to enhance resilience and security.

Representatives from eight SMEs in sectors including artificial intelligence, commercial spaceflight and quantum technology attended the meeting.

China has strengthened support for specialized and innovative SMEs as part of broader efforts to boost industrial innovation and supply-chain resilience.

Earlier this month, China issued a plan to promote the high-quality development of SMEs during 2026-2030, setting targets for business growth, innovation, and the development environment.

By 2030, China's SMEs are expected to grow in both quality and scale, with per-capita operating revenue of major SMEs posting cumulative growth of around 15 percent over the five-year period, according to the plan.

— Xinhua

## World Organization for Science Literacy debuts in Beijing

BEIJING – The World Organization for Science Literacy made its debut in Beijing yesterday.

At the opening ceremony of the 2026 World Conference on Science Literacy, the organization pledged to promote exchanges and cooperation, deepen collaborative innovation and foster positive interaction between science and technology and society, so as to jointly enhance public science literacy and support the beneficial development of an intelligent society.

As an international sci-tech organization, it currently has 32 founding members from 21 countries

across Asia, Europe, South America, Africa and Oceania.

The organization was initiated with the support of the China Association for Science and Technology and registered in Beijing in June this year.

With sci-tech issues getting increasingly globalized, cross-border dialogue and collaborative action on science popularization have become ever more urgent.

In recent years, China has stepped up efforts to advance science popularization. In 2025, the proportion of Chinese citizens with scientific literacy reached 16.74 percent, a

leap from a relatively low level to a medium level.

Meanwhile, the country has actively engaged in global science popularization cooperation, helping improve scientific literacy in economically underdeveloped regions and among key demographic groups.

Elies Molins, Co-President of the World Federation of Scientific Workers, said scientific literacy is more critical than ever. Only by enabling the public to fully understand both the potential and the risks of technological progress can the risks brought by new knowledge be reduced, he said.

— Xinhua



Visitors watch a robot performance at the 2026 World Manufacturing Convention (WMC) in Hefei, capital of Anhui Province, yesterday. Themed "Intelligent Manufacturing For a Better Future," the 2026 WMC kicked off yesterday.

— Xinhua

## China's 5-year plan to elevate electronic information manufacturing sector

### Analysis

BEIJING – As artificial intelligence (AI) plays an increasingly significant role in reshaping the global industrial landscape, China has recently unveiled a plan to advance its electronic information manufacturing sector, a critical foundation for AI development, over the next five years.

The development plan for the electronic information manufacturing industry during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), jointly issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and the National Development and Reform Commission, aims to further consolidate the pillar role of the industry by 2030.

Industrial firms in the sector with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan (about 2.96 million U.S. dollars) are expected to see their combined revenue surpass 30 trillion yuan, and R&D investment intensity of the sector will rise to 3.5 percent, according to the plan.

### TO ENHANCE INDUSTRIAL BASE

The electronic information manufacturing industry is a major force in the new industrialization drive. By the end of 2025, China's electronic information manufacturing industry had led the country's 41 major industrial sectors in terms of revenue for 13 consecutive years.

Building on that foundation, the plan presents a systemic framework to strengthen

the industrial base, spanning integrated circuits, electronic components and materials, intelligent sensors, specialized electronic equipment and measuring instruments, and the photonics industry.

The framework aims to tackle bottlenecks in key areas and build an independent and controllable industrial base, said Liu Bin, an official with the MIIT.

Liu pointed to photonics as an example, noting that advancing breakthroughs in core technologies and establishing pilot testing platforms for key areas and shared needs will strengthen the sector from the ground up. These efforts, he said, will lay a solid foundation for development and accelerate both technological innovation and industrialization process.

As a representative sector of the electronic information manufacturing industry, China's integrated circuit industry is entering a new phase of rapid growth, driven by the explosive global demand for high-end computing and memory chips brought about by the AI revolution.

Customs data shows that in the first seven months, the country's integrated circuit exports reached US\$216 billion, up 99.5 percent year on year, already surpassing the full-year total of 2025.

A semiconductor technology company in southwest China's Sichuan Province has already completed its first half-year production targets, and aims to double its output value from last year, according to its general manager.

### TO STRENGTHEN COMPETITIVENESS

While strengthening the industrial base, the plan also sets out strategies to boost the competitiveness of whole devices and systems. This includes enhancing industrial chain resilience in key areas, developing a robust computing ecosystem, and promoting innovation in consumer electronics, among other initiatives.

Terminals form the basic foundation of industrial scale and serve as the gateway through which smart technologies reach hundreds of millions of users, said Liang Linjun, a researcher at China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT).

The plan outlines a dedicated push for innovation in key consumer electronics products, ranging from high-end mobile phones and personal computers to virtual reality devices. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), China's output of core consumer electronics, including mobile phones and computers, maintained a top global ranking.

The accelerating evolution of a new generation of AI is bringing new demand, new product forms, and new ways of development to the electronic information manufacturing industry, while raising higher requirements for basic hardware supply and system coordination, said Liang.

Liang called for efforts to open up typical application scenarios, develop standards for agent collaboration, high-speed computing interconnect, and hardware-software

compatibility, increase long-term capital supply that matches innovation cycles, and train more talent with expertise in both AI and electronics manufacturing.

The plan also addresses rising concerns over cutthroat competition in the industry. It calls for timely revisions to industry norms, coordinated planning and early-warning systems for capacity across subsectors, and a comprehensive effort to curb cutthroat competition.

As the "hardware foundation" of the digital world, the electronic information manufacturing industry is undergoing profound changes in its strategic position, competitive logic, and growth model, said Ao Li, vice president of the CAICT.

Turning scale into systemic strength, as well as moving from leading in volume to winning on quality, will be a major task for China's electronic information manufacturing industry during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, Ao said.

Industry insiders say government, industry, academia, research institutions, and users need to work together to translate the plan into results by strengthening the industrial foundation and making the supply chain more resilient.

Such a collective push is expected to put China's electronic information manufacturing sector on firmer footing, with a more complete chain and more active innovation, and to lay a solid base for the country's goals of building itself into a manufacturing powerhouse and a cyber powerhouse, they said.

— Xinhua

# Malaysian king grants house arrest for jailed former PM Najib

KUALA LUMPUR – Former Malaysian leader Najib Razak, jailed for his role in the country's 1MDB corruption scandal, has been granted house arrest subject to paying a US\$12 million fine, officials said on Friday.

King Sultan Ibrahim "has granted a conditional pardon" to Najib, "allowing him to serve the remainder of his sentence under house arrest until 23 August 2028," lawyers from Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's office said.

The conditional pardon was "subject to the payment of a fine of RM 50 million (Malaysian ringgit) (US\$12.3 million), they said in a statement.

A Malaysian judge late last year rejected an original request to allow Najib - jailed for his role in one of the largest-ever global plunders of a sovereign wealth fund - to serve the rest of his time at home.

Najib was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in July 2020 in a first trial over vast sums of money, siphoned



Members of the media wait outside the house of Malaysia's former prime minister Najib Razak in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday. — AFP

from a former 1MDB subsidiary called SRC International Sdn Bhd.

A pardons board later halved the term, and his fine was reduced to RM50 million.

His sentence in this case is scheduled to be completed by August 2028.

Days after Najib's December bid for house arrest was turned down, the ex-PM was again sentenced to another

15 years behind bars in a separate trial, also linked to the 1MDB graft scandal.

Najib was also then fined RM11.4 billion for his role in the plunder of billions from the now defunct 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) more than a decade ago.

He is currently appealing the 15-year sentence, which is only set to start once the six-year sentence is completed. — AFP

## N Korea fires 2 ballistic missiles into East Sea: Seoul

Kang Jin-kyu

SEOUL – North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea off its eastern coast yesterday, South Korea's military said, with the second flying more than 600.

The launches came days after Pyongyang reasserted its status as a nuclear-armed state and rejected a United Nations resolution demanding it halt its nuclear activities.

South Korea's military said the first missile was launched at around 3:00 p.m. [local time] from the Wonsan area and flew around 450 kilometres into the East Sea, a body of water also called the Sea of Japan.

"Our military detected an additional short-range ballistic missile launched from the Wonsan area of North Korea towards the East Sea at around 5:50 p.m.," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

The second missile "flew more than 600 kilometres, and South Korean and US authorities are conducting a detailed analysis to determine its exact specifications," it said.

The JCS said South Korea, the United States and Japan had been

"tracking and sharing relevant developments from the initial stage of the launch".

Japan lodged a "stern protest" with North Korea over the launches, condemning them as a threat to regional peace and security, the Kyodo news agency cited the government as saying.

South Korea's presidential National Security Office convened an emergency security meeting following the first launch and assessed its impact on national security, the presidential office said.

The government called on Pyongyang to "immediately cease" its ballistic missile launches, describing yesterday's firings as a "grave act" that violated UN Security Council resolutions.

### 'Absolute' status

The launches came eight days after North Korea fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles towards the East Sea as part of what it later described as a joint firepower drill.

That exercise involved long-range artillery and missiles, with the weapons

"hitting the targets with 100 percent accuracy", state media reported.

North Korea accused "hostile forces" of seeking to end the country's nuclear programme during this week's General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

A foreign ministry spokesperson said the IAEA resolution "has no effect on the DPRK's position as a nuclear weapons state", using the acronym for North Korea's official name.

The North's status as a nuclear power is "guaranteed by the actual nuclear deterrent and irreversibly and permanently fixed by the supreme law of the state", the spokesperson said.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, recently said the country's nuclear-armed status was "absolute" and called those hoping for its denuclearisation "idiots".

US President Donald Trump said in August that North Korea possessed 57 "very powerful" nuclear weapons, while South Korea has put the figure at between 80 and 120. — AFP

## Australian man pleads not guilty to Thai suitcase murder

BANGKOK – An Australian accused of murdering a teenage girl in Thailand and abandoning her body in a suitcase pleaded not guilty in court on Friday, citing self-defence.

Simon Peter Carman, 45, was arrested at a Bangkok airport in June as he prepared to take a flight back to Australia, after the 17-year-old victim's friend had reported her missing.

The young woman's body was found in a suitcase near a railway track in Pattaya, a seaside resort city south of the capital Bangkok.

Police said she died of suffocation.

Carman appeared on Friday at Pattaya Provincial Court, where he denied all charges, citing "self-defence and a mistaken belief about

the victim's age", a court statement said. It did not elaborate further.

The Australian is charged with murder, concealing a body and taking a minor aged between 15 and 18 for indecent purposes.

The court denied Carman's bail application after prosecutors opposed his release, saying he posed a flight risk. The next court date was set for October 12.

Police previously said CCTV footage showed him entering a condominium in Pattaya with the girl and leaving that evening carrying a large black suitcase.

The case put the spotlight on Pattaya, which is popular with foreign tourists for its beaches and nightlife, but also has a reputation for sex tourism. — AFP

## Dynamite, ammonium nitrate found in trucks aboard Philippine ferry

MANILA – The Philippine Coast Guard said on Friday it confiscated 12.5 tonnes of ammonium nitrate and 130 cases of dynamite aboard a vessel sitting at port in Palawan province.

The explosive substances were found last Sunday alongside materials used in detonations inside two trucks on a ferry that carried both cargo and passengers, the coast guard said in a statement.

Ammonium nitrate, a chemical used in fertilisers, is safe if stored properly, but there can be catastrophic consequences when mishandled or mixed with explosives.

A stash of 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate left to degrade in a Beirut warehouse killed more than 220 people and laid waste to swathes of the Lebanese capital when it exploded in 2020.

"The explosives and components were discovered inside (two trucks) aboard the RoRo (roll-on, roll-off) passenger vessel," the coast guard said in a Friday statement, adding the cargo

had been "improperly declared".

"The confiscated explosives and components are currently under the custody of the Philippine National Police," they said.

"The (coast guard) will work closely with the PNP to determine the role of the accompanying personnel in the shipment of said cargo."

It was unclear if any arrests had been made as of Friday afternoon, and the name of the involved company has not been disclosed.

A coast guard officer tasked with port safety had been "relieved from his post to ensure impartial investigation", the statement said.

The discovery comes in the wake of a series of deadly ferry accidents.

On September 9, a fire ripped after an explosion in the cargo hold of the M/V June Aster near the resort area of Coron, Palawan, burning dozens of passengers to death.

In January, a triple-decker ferry carrying more than 340 people sank off the southern Philippines, killing at least 52 people. — AFP

## School shooting in southern Philippines kills at least 2

MANILA – A student killed at least two people at a school in the southern Philippines on Friday before turning the gun on himself, officials told AFP, the country's third deadly campus attack since June.

Local rescuers received a call about gunfire on the campus of Banga National High School in South Cotabato province in Mindanao at about 1:30 p.m. [local time].

"One male and one female were killed, both Grade nine students," disaster agency worker Rizalie Dedel told AFP over the phone, adding that the gunman had taken his own life.

South Cotabato provincial governor Reynaldo Tamayo told AFP

the shooter had been a classmate of the victims.

"He is a student of that school, grade nine," Tamayo said.

He said at least three people were being treated for gunshot wounds at a local hospital.

Tamayo said the shooter had used a "very well-maintained" nine-millimetre handgun and acted alone.

Banga Mayor Albert Palencia said in a separate radio interview that the suspect, the son of Department of Education officials, had taken the gun from a home safe.

He said the grade nine student had warned two friends of his plan to do it "right after lunch".

Police have yet to confirm the age of the shooter.

In a video posted to Facebook and confirmed by AFP, a man can be seen carrying what appears to be a wounded child from the school, rushing him into the sidecar of a waiting motorbike.

Friday's shooting comes one month to the day after a student livestreamed himself shooting a schoolmate dead before taking his own life at another school in Mindanao.

Live shooter drills were conducted across the Philippines this month to strengthen security.

Palencia said on Friday the Banga shooter's parents were involved in the drills there. — AFP



This handout image taken on Friday and released on Saturday by Indonesia's Ministry of Forestry and International Animal Rescue Indonesia (YIARI) shows a mother orangutan and her baby being evacuated by joint team members from the West Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) and YIARI after they were trapped by smoke from forest and land fires in a palm oil plantation area in Pelang village, Ketapang, West Kalimantan. The mother orangutan, estimated to be around 15 years old, and her one-to-two-month-old baby survived in a narrow 400-square-metre area surrounded by oil palm trees and partially scorched land. Indonesia has struggled for weeks to contain fires that have scorched large tracts of Borneo and Sumatra, with the smoke drifting across the region. — AFP

# Sri Lanka flies monks over drought-hit areas to seek divine help

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka's Air Force said yesterday it had flown Buddhist monks who prayed and sprinkled holy water over drought-hit areas in an attempt to encourage rain.

Sri Lanka's meteorology department has warned that both severe drought and heavy rains are likely to hit Sri Lanka during the rest of the year as the largely agricultural nation faces its "worst" El Niño climate phenomenon.

Three saffron-robed monks chanted prayers during Saturday evening's flight invoking the gods to end the drought, while airmen sprinkled holy water from five-litre plastic bottles.

An air force official told AFP the monks were flown aboard a Y-12 fixed-wing aircraft.

"As the nation faces the hardships of dry weather, the... aircraft takes

to the skies in a symbolic act of compassion," the air force said in a social media post.

While the monks prayed for rain over drought-hit areas, the meteorology department has also warned of heavy downpours over other parts of the South Asian nation of 22 million people.

At Yala, Sri Lanka's largest wildlife park in the southeast, two out of six blocks have been closed to visitors because of the drought.

Weather experts have forecast that those dry conditions will give way to heavy rain from late September until December.

However, those rains are then expected to be followed by a prolonged drought early next year.

Water reservoirs, including

those supplying hydroelectric power stations, are at around 50 percent capacity, according to officials.

That compares well with previous years, but there are concerns if drought conditions intensify next year as forecast.

Sri Lanka's electricity utility has also held religious services in the past to appease the gods when hydro reservoirs run low.

El Niño is a natural climate variation that warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, bringing worldwide changes in wind and rain patterns.

Human-caused climate change can amplify its effects because a warmer ocean and atmosphere make more energy and moisture available to feed extreme weather events.

– AFP



This handout photograph released by the Sri Lanka Air Force yesterday shows Buddhist monks aboard a Y-12 aircraft chanting prayers over the island's drought-hit areas seeking rain.

– AFP

## Australian PM seeks big tech backing for internet safety, AI rules

SYDNEY - Australian leader Anthony Albanese said yesterday he was seeking big tech backing for his country's child online safety laws and greater AI regulation, after meeting former Apple CEO Tim Cook in California.

Following the meeting with Cook at the tech giant's headquarters on Saturday, Albanese said Australia "can't do it alone" when it came to protecting children from the dangers of the internet.

"We spoke about what we're doing to protect children from online harm and the work ahead," Albanese wrote on social media.

"We're putting stronger rules in place to keep Australians safe online," he said.

"And now, big tech companies like Apple are stepping up too."

Cook also said he told Albanese about new "strong and intuitive controls to help keep kids safe online" in a post on X.

Australia implemented legislation barring under-16s from social media platforms last year, part of a world-first crackdown designed to protect children from online bullying and "predatory algorithms".

New draft laws unveiled this

month would place a "duty of care" requirement on the firms behind popular platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram – as well as allow users to turn off their algorithms if they want to.

Data last month found that under-16s in Australia were increasing their use of social media apps such as Instagram and TikTok despite the ban.

The draft laws will be introduced to parliament later this year after consultation with social media companies, industry bodies and civil society groups.

Albanese – visiting the United States this week for the upcoming United Nations General Assembly – has also used his trip to call for greater regulation of AI, following dire safety warnings from industry leaders.

Australia will introduce new standards for AI by the end of the year, he said.

"The risk is that AI develops in a way in which humans are no longer in control of what AI is producing," Albanese told national broadcaster ABC.

"How do we make sure that people are in control rather than the technology in control of us?"

– AFP

## Baby orangutans in India expose 'frightening' scale of trafficking

Arunabh Saikia

NEW DELHI – Five baby orangutans abandoned in an Indian forest have exposed a "massive" exotic wildlife trade, with traffickers smuggling increasingly rare species into the country, experts say.

They warn of a growing multi-million-dollar trade in endangered animals, including apes smuggled through war-torn Myanmar to feed demand among wealthy Indians seeking exotic status symbols to flaunt on social media.

"There have been several instances of exotic wild animals being found or seized across the country, said Sumanth Bindumadhav of Humane World for Animals India. "The scale is massive."

Critically endangered orangutans are native only to Indonesia's Sumatra island and Borneo, which it shares with Malaysia and Brunei.

Yet the five tiny orangutans were found by rangers in Balasore, in India's eastern Odisha state.

Aged around one-and-a-half years old, they are being cared for at a zoo. Indonesia has requested their return.

Bindumadhav's group, in a June 2026 report, detailed what it called a "rising trade in exotic wildlife", demonstrated by a "steep increase in seizures" that reflected a "surge in illegal trade".

The report estimated India's exotic-pet market at US\$42.6 million in 2024.

Orangutans and gibbons, small apes, were being "increasingly trafficked into India" from Southeast Asia's rainforests, it added.

### 'Alarming scale'

A senior official at India's Wildlife Crime Control Bureau said "thousands of social media influencers" were promoting exotic

species as pets online, fuelling demand among followers.

"It is a huge market," said the official, who requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media. "Rich people keep them in their homes."

Under a government voluntary disclosure scheme, more than 40,000 people had registered exotic animals by February 2021, government data shows.

The figure is likely only a fraction of those in private hands, analysts say.

"This is a figure from only those who registered themselves, so the true volume of it is potentially much larger and remains unknown," said Bindumadhav.

"The true scale of it is actually quite frightening."

Former India head of global anti-wildlife-trade group TRAFFIC Shekhar Kumar Niraj said the surge in trafficking was also linked to a "rising number" of animals held in private hands.

"Private zoos have violated laws at a very alarming scale across the country," said Niraj.

"Primates are very popular in zoos because they are very intelligent, like to interact with humans, the kind of thing zoos want."

Indian federal authorities did not respond to AFP's requests for comment.

The World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) documented 56 seizures involving about 4,000 exotic animals in 2022 alone.

In October 2025, Mumbai customs officers arrested a passenger carrying two endangered gibbons stuffed inside a checked bag.

Other seizures in Mumbai last year included lizards, tree-climbing possums and dozens of venomous vipers.

In 2024, forest officials recovered a trafficked orangutan from a flat in Maharashtra state.

But such seizures represent only a fraction of the trade, experts warn.

### 'Porous border'

"The scale of it is much, much bigger than what we see actually based on the seizure data," said Jimmy Borah of the environmental advocacy group Aaranyak.

Experts have previously raised concerns over Vantara, a vast wildlife rescue and conservation centre in Gujarat founded by Anant Ambani, son of billionaire Mukesh Ambani, over its intake of endangered species.

Vantara has consistently denied any wrongdoing.

In August, it said it was taking "bold steps to reset its operations", had withdrawn all applications to import live animals, and named former head of the global wildlife watchdog CITES, John Scanlon, to chair its governing council.

Exactly how the orangutans were brought to Odisha – more than 2,000 kilometres by sea, and 7,000 kilometres by land – is not clear. Police have launched a criminal investigation.

Experts say that in addition to airports and formal cargo routes, the land border between Myanmar and India's northeast is a key trafficking route.

"The northeast is important for seizures of live exotic animals, linked to cross-border movement from Southeast Asia," said Dipankar Ghose of WWF-India.

Authorities have seized other exotic primates in the region in recent years, smuggled in jungle routes across the frontier.

"We are talking about miles and miles of a very porous border," said Borah of Aaranyak.

– AFP



An aerial view shows protesters and members of affected families lying on symbolic funeral pyres placed in the water during a protest against the Ken-Betwa River Link Project, near the Majhgawan Dam on the Ken River in Panna district of India's Madhya Pradesh state yesterday.

– AFP

## Australian man charged over killing of 90-year-old woman near Bondi beach

SYDNEY – Australian police charged a man yesterday for allegedly stabbing a 90-year-old woman to death near Sydney's Bondi Beach.

Emergency services were called

around 5:15 p.m. [local time] after a reported stabbing on Chambers Avenue, just a few metres from the beach, New South Wales police said.

The woman was found with "significant injuries to her torso"

and died at the scene.

A 47-year-old man who was known to the woman was charged with domestic violence murder and has been refused bail, police said.

– AFP

# Israeli settler killed in West Bank, suspect arrested



Ultra-Orthodox Jews help a boy to reach a rabbi ahead of the traditional Malkot ceremony, a few hours before the start of Yom Kippur, the Jewish holy day of Atonement, at a synagogue in the city of Beit Shemesh in Israel's Jerusalem District yesterday. Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, is one of the most important holidays of the Jewish year during which Israelis observe a period of a 25-hour fasting, reflection and prayers.

— AFP

Louis Baudoin-Laarman

RAMALLAH — An Israeli settler was shot dead in the occupied West Bank yesterday on the eve of the Yom Kippur holiday, and the military said it arrested the suspected gunman.

Israel's military also reported a car-ramming attack attempt in the West Bank, in which the perpetrator was killed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the shooting as a "murderous attack" carried out ahead of the most important holiday for Jews, which started last night (local time).

Beilinson Hospital, in the central Israeli city of Petah Tikvah, said that the Israeli man from the first attack, carried out near the Israeli settlement of Neveh Tzuf, north of Ramallah, had died of his wounds.

Israel Gantz, the head of the Yesha Council, the main representative organisation for West Bank settlers, said the deceased man was one of their number.

"IDF soldiers apprehended the terrorist who carried out the shooting attack," the army said in a statement, adding that it located him at a hospital, which Palestinian sources

said was in the city of Ramallah.

The army said a soldier had earlier shot and wounded the suspected assailant at the scene of the incident near Ramallah in the central West Bank.

Israel's army chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir said at the site of the attack that the military remained "on high alert, deployed and prepared with soldiers reinforced across all sectors".

AFP journalists reported that many checkpoints in that part of the West Bank had been closed or conducting searches in vehicles.

"We will impose a closure on the village and conduct investigations, through which we will reach everyone who assisted the terrorist," Zamir said.

## 'Make them pay'

"No terrorist is immune, nor are those who aided them. We will settle the score with all of them: in Gaza, in Lebanon, and in Judea and Samaria," Netanyahu said, referring to the various fronts where Israel's military is active.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said in a statement that he shared the victim's family's grief.

"On the eve of this sacred

festival, let it be stated clearly: Terror will not break us, and it will not shake our spirit," he said.

Separately, the military said its troops had eliminated a man "who attempted to carry out a ramming attack against IDF (Israel Defence Forces) soldiers operating in the Ganim area," a newly re-established settlement in the West Bank, near the Palestinian city of Jenin.

The Palestinian health ministry identified the attacker as Sami Zwaideh, 32, whom it said Israeli forces shot and killed in the Jenin area.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967. More than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements in the Palestinian territory, which are illegal under international law, among some three million Palestinians.

According to an AFP tally based on data from the Palestinian health ministry, Israeli forces or settlers have killed more than 1,100 Palestinians in the territory since the start of the Gaza war.

Israeli figures show at least 49 Israelis, including civilians and security personnel, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations during the same period.

— AFP

# Iran says conveyed conditions to US for reopening Hormuz

TEHRAN — Iran's top negotiator said yesterday that Tehran had conveyed to Washington through mediators its conditions for reopening the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which it has blockaded throughout the Middle East war.

The two foes are locked in a stalemate months into the conflict that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February.

Tehran has since maintained a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping route for the world's oil and gas, while Washington is pushing a campaign to choke the Islamic republic's ports and economy.

"Our messages and the explanation of our conditions have been clearly conveyed to the other party through mediators," said Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who has acted as chief negotiator in talks to end the war.

"As long as the conditions are not met... and the US commitments are not honoured,

it will be impossible to return to the situation from before the negotiations and to an open strait," he added, according to state television.

Mohsen Rezaei, the head of Iran's supreme national security council, said on Saturday that the Islamic republic had conveyed its conditions to the US via mediator Qatar.

"Our conditions are an end to the war on all fronts, the release of our frozen funds and an end to the naval blockade," he said in an interview with Al-Jazeera.

Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya central military command, meanwhile, issued a threat against the United States on Sunday, in a statement carried by state television.

"We warn that if the US makes a mistake in dealing with Islamic Iran, all of that country's bases and interests in the region will become the target of continuous, effective and painful attacks, without any limit or restraint," it said.

— AFP

# Trump says Houthis agree not to fight US, as attacks mount on Saudi allies: Fox News

WASHINGTON, DC — President Donald Trump said yesterday that Yemen's Houthis have agreed not to attack the United States, despite the Iran-allied group stepping up its war against US ally Saudi Arabia, Fox News reported.

The network's reporter Trey Yingst, who often talks to Trump, cited the president saying that Washington is "in constant communication with the Houthis and that they've agreed not to fight the United States."

Trump has made the claim before that the Houthis are holding back from attacking US forces in the region.

"The Houthis called us and they don't want to fight with us," Trump said during a visit to Ireland on September 12. "They don't want us to go after them."

But the latest comments to Fox

News came as close US ally Saudi Arabia is under growing pressure, with a missile targeting the capital Riyadh on Saturday.

The Houthis have also staged a rapid offensive inside Yemen, seizing swaths of territory from the internationally recognized government, which is backed by Saudi Arabia.

Fox News reported that Trump is in "deciding mode" on Iran, where US and Israeli forces launched a massive aerial bombing campaign on February 28 before settling into a now almost-seven-month standoff.

Yingst said Trump told him that "big things will be happening in the not-so-distant future" and that "Iranians better behave, and he is making this decision as to whether or not to blow up their nation."

— AFP

# Iran shuts language centre affiliated with French embassy in Tehran

TEHRAN — Iranian authorities yesterday announced the closure of a French language centre associated with the embassy, accusing it of having undertaken "illegal activities".

"Based on the Tehran prosecutor's office, the illegal centre affiliated with the French embassy in Tehran, which has operated for years under the guise of language instruction, was

closed," the judiciary's Mizan news website said, referring to the French Language Centre (CLF).

The judiciary accused the centre of conducting "illegal acts that violated diplomatic conventions".

It alleged the centre "abused its status as a language training facility" and sought to "identify and build networks among the country's elite figures while facilitating their departure".

Relations between Tehran and Paris have been strained in recent months.

Last month, France announced the expulsion of two Iranian diplomats in response to the brief arrest and banning of two French envoys to the Islamic republic.

Tehran had accused the two French diplomats of "interference in Iran's internal affairs".

— AFP

# Burnham congratulates Denmark on US-Greenland deal

LONDON — British Prime Minister Andy Burnham on Sunday congratulated Danish counterpart Mette Frederiksen on a deal agreed between the United States, Denmark and Greenland.

Burnham said the deal, set to be signed next week, benefitted the US, Greenland and Denmark, his office said.

Downing Street said the leaders in a phone call welcomed

Washington's "commitment to the region" and "underlined the strategic and shared importance of the High North for Euro-Atlantic security".

Burnham said he would also congratulate US President Donald Trump on the deal. The two leaders are set to hold their first in-person meeting next week at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

— AFP

## Bachelet quits race to be next UN chief

SANTIAGO DE CHILE – Michelle Bachelet, the former president of Chile, withdrew her candidacy for the position of United Nations secretary-general on Saturday, weeks after a straw poll showed her in second to last place among eight candidates.

“Today I announced that I have decided not to continue with my candidacy for the position of secretary-general of the United Nations,” Bachelet, who served as Chile’s first female leader, said in a video posted on her social media accounts.

“Some may believe that the time was not right for a candidacy like the one I sought to represent. I do not regret having taken on this great challenge,” she said.

Bachelet stressed that by running for the top UN post, she had helped spark debate “that the next secretary-general should be a woman from Latin America.”

Chile’s government said in a statement that it had withdrawn its support for Bachelet’s candidacy in March. Since then, it has not backed any of the candidates in the running.

The government also “reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism and to reform of the United Nations.”

So far in three polls as part of the informal process to pick the next UN chief, the 15-member Security Council twice placed

Costa Rica’s former vice president Rebeca Grynspan in the lead.

Guyanese ex-foreign minister Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett placed first in the third poll.

Bachelet was initially nominated last February by the administration of then-president Gabriel Boric, and supported by the leftist leaders of Mexico and Brazil.

But the left-leaning 74-year-old’s candidacy lost momentum after Chile’s new leader, far-right President José Antonio Kast, withdrew his backing.

Earlier this month at a university event, Bachelet had appeared to recognise her underdog status, joking about her slim chances of leading the global body.

No woman has led the United Nations in its 80-year history, and only one Latin American has served as secretary-general: Javier Pérez de Cuellar of Peru, at the helm from 1982 to 1991.

According to unwritten practice – one that is not always followed – the top position rotates among geographic regions. This time, it would be Latin America’s turn.

Bachelet’s withdrawal leaves four women and three men in the race to succeed the current UN chief, 77-year-old António Guterres of Portugal, who completes his second five-year term on December 31. – AFP

## Thousands march in France against ‘licence to kill’ draft law

PARIS – Thousands of people marched in Paris and other French cities on Sunday against a proposed law on the legitimate use of force that critics say would be a “licence to kill” for police and gendarmes.

In July, deputies in the National Assembly approved the bill, which says that any law-enforcement official who uses force is assumed to have acted legally when using their weapon. It now faces a vote in the Senate.

Politicians, rights groups and other activists joined the Paris demonstration, among them Mathilde Panot of the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party.

“The police kill already,” Panot told the crowd, calling for the bill to be voted down in the Senate.

“In the [French] Republic there can be no organised police impunity,” she added. “In the Republic, there cannot be a category of citizens who have the right of life or death over other citizens.”

Amal Bentousi, the sister of Amine, a robber who was shot in the back by police in an incident in 2012 at Seine-Saint-Denis, just north of Paris, was among the marchers.

What she described as a “licence to execute” was intended to “reverse the burden of proof” in such incidents, she said.

Amnesty International, France’s magistrates’ union and the country’s League of Human Rights also took part in the protest.

Scores of other marches against the bill were organised in cities around France this weekend. Police said 4,500 people had rallied in Lyon and 3,700 in Toulouse.

A petition against the bill on the National Assembly website gathered 730,000 signatures, but a parliamentary law committee dismissed it in July.

Defenders of the bill say it would avoid law enforcement officers automatically coming under suspicion or being detained when using armed force.

But in the Marseille protest, Cédric Picard, of Amnesty International, said that “we are afraid police violence would only grow with this law”.

“In a country where police abuse is among the worst, this law risks worsening the situation,” said one protester, a high school student who gave his first name as Hugo.

On Saturday, French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez called on police to be “particularly vigilant” during the protests, fearing incidents.

In the city of Rennes, officials said eight people were arrested and three police officers injured after projectiles were thrown at them. – AFP

## In Syria, a library of Islamist texts sees light of day a decade on



Mustafa Khaled Alwan, a 72-year-old Syrian citizen, poses for a picture surrounded by his books, which he retrieved after hiding them behind a false wall for 15 years at the start of the uprising against Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad, in his home in the al-Bayadah neighbourhood in Homs on Saturday. – AFP

### Bakr Alkaseem

HOM – After more than a decade of displacement, a Syrian man finally tore down a wall he had built to conceal a library of mainly Islamist books that would likely have landed him in prison, or worse, under Bashar al-Assad’s rule.

Like many in Syria, Mustafa Khaled Alwan is a sympathiser of the Muslim Brotherhood, which long opposed the Assad dynasty.

The 72-year-old was elated to find his library mostly intact, allowing him to access texts including the works of Egypt’s Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Brotherhood, and Sayyid Qutb, one of the main modern advocates for the implementation of sharia in every domain of life, including in government.

Decades on from his execution in Egypt, Qutb would continue to influence movements across the region, ranging from reformist Islamists to jihadists.

His collection, numbering in the hundreds, also includes Islamic teachings, poems and books on science and social topics.

“This library is very precious to me, I filled it up slowly,” he told AFP from central Syria’s Homs.

Under Hafez al-Assad, Islamists were violently suppressed, most notably in a 1982 massacre in Hama, whose death toll has never been formally established, though estimates usually range from 10,000 to 40,000.

Alwan said the Hama massacre

was a “pivotal point for all Syrians”.

“I was upset, but we were afraid to even talk to ourselves.”

### ‘We built a wall’

Yet despite the major risk involved, Alwan was undeterred from gathering the books.

As protests erupted against Assad across Syria in 2011, Alwan feared his support for the demonstrators might put his library in jeopardy.

Amid the protests, Homs was dubbed the “capital of the revolution” and was subjected to particularly brutal crackdowns by Assad’s forces.

“At the end of 2011, when the situation was difficult, I moved [the library] to the home I recently bought for my son,” he said.

“No one knew I owned this home,” which encouraged him to move the books there.

“Some revolutionaries came and helped me, and we built a wall” to hide the library.

It was in Homs that armed anti-government factions first took up arms, and it was also among the areas targeted by a brutal siege that left people trapped with no food or medical supplies.

The Bayada neighbourhood, where Alwan and his son’s homes are located, was subjected to heavy bombing by Assad’s forces.

By the end of 2011, Alwan had left Homs due to the siege, leaving his library behind.

Upon returning after Assad’s

December 2024 ouster, Alwan found his home severely damaged and burnt from the inside.

He felt “a mixture of hope and fear” over the fate of his library.

When he began dismantling the wall, he found that his collection “was more than 90 percent intact... and I moved it home”.

Assad’s fall saw many previously-banned works, including books recounting torture in Syrian prisons or texts on radical Islamic theology, sit openly in bookstores.

Syria’s new Islamist authorities, whose President Ahmed al-Sharaa is himself a former jihadist, have been faced with the delicate task of attempting to reunify the fractured country.

But around Alwan’s home, Homs is still heavily damaged, with Syrians trying to rebuild after more than a decade of war.

Religiously-diverse Homs, which witnessed horrific sectarian violence during the conflict, has also seen several waves of attacks against the Alawite minority since the fall of Assad, who hails from that community.

But like many others, Alwan can breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that he is no longer under threat for his beliefs.

“The sweetest moment of my life was finding the library in excellent condition,” he said.

“We hope the [new] government will live up to its responsibility regarding the sacrifices made in Syria.” – AFP

## Russia reports mass cyberattacks targeting elections

MOSCOW – Russia’s electoral chief said yesterday that there had been over 1,000 waves of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks targeting Russian election infrastructure in recent days.

Ella Pamfilova, chair of Russia’s Central Election Commission, did not say who was responsible.

The attacks appeared to have been carried out by “highly professional, well-coordinated groups using artificial intelligence tools,” she said.

DDoS attacks involve overwhelming a system with internet traffic so that it is unable to function normally.

“Over the past period, more than 1,000 waves of DDoS attacks have been recorded against infrastructure in Russia that is specifically involved in the electoral process,” Pamfilova was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

Voting is under way in Russia to determine all 450 seats in the lower

house State Duma.

The ruling United Russia party, which backs President Vladimir Putin and has won every parliamentary election in Russia since 2003, is widely expected to secure another victory.

All other parties cleared to run back Putin and the Ukraine offensive, while Russia’s Supreme Court struck the anti-war Yabloko (“Apple”) party off the ballot weeks before the vote. – AFP

# Brazilian police nab suspected serial killer disguised as woman

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazilian police said on Friday they had captured a suspected serial killer linked to at least 16 deaths since May, who was arrested while disguised as a woman and carrying a baby.

He claims to have killed more than four times that number.

The suspect was arrested last Sunday after a 30-hour police manhunt in a forested area of Paraíba state in northeastern Brazil.

He was wearing a dress and long black wig, which police described as a disguise to evade capture. In a statement, they said he had been carrying a baby in his arms.

Local media reported the child was not related to the suspect. Police did not release details on

the baby's condition or say where it came from.

"Although the suspect claimed involvement in 80 homicides, civil police have confirmed his participation in 16 killings in the region, 11 of which he confessed to during questioning," police told AFP.

The 16 homicides all took place since May. The identities of the victims and details of the killings have not been made public.

The suspect evaded an earlier attempt to arrest him a few weeks ago after a confrontation with security forces, who consider him a member of an "ultra-violent" criminal group.

In a video of his interrogation obtained by AFP, the man said he

acted alone and denied having ties to organised crime.

Instead, he claimed that all his victims were "linked to the criminal world" and that he was taking justice into his own hands in response to threats against himself and his family.

"I never acted against any family man, mother or working person," he said, denying being a "psychopath."

He said he had committed his first homicide at the age of 13.

After the earlier attempt to arrest the suspect, police seized bulletproof vests, the stock of a submachine gun, and over 100 rounds of ammunition, which the man acknowledged were his during questioning. – AFP

# Spain move U20 friendly from Ceuta amid migration crisis

MADRID – A Spain Under-20 match will be moved from Ceuta because of security concerns, Spanish football federation president Rafael Louzán said yesterday.

They were due to face Mexico on September 30 in a friendly in the Spanish exclave in north Africa which is currently gripped by a migration crisis.

"The police advised us against going ahead with it

[in Ceuta] at this moment," said Louzán.

"We will not be able to host it [there], but we will continue to stand with Ceuta."

Louzán said the match is now likely to take place in Madrid instead.

More than 70,000 migrants entered Ceuta from Morocco on July 30 and 31 in a chaotic surge, leaving scores dead.

The majority returned in the following hours, but thousands remained in precarious conditions in the small, overwhelmed city, sleeping rough or in makeshift tents.

Three Real Madrid players, including French superstar Kylian Mbappe, came under fire after they declined to fully wear a T-shirt supporting the residents of Ceuta last week ahead of a match in Elche.

Mbappe said he did so as a gesture in support of the immigrants who lost their lives, while still supporting Ceutans.

– AFP

# In Brazil's Amazon, the hunt for oil fuels hopes and fears

Louis Genot

OIAPOQUE – Indigenous chief Wagner Karipuna gazes worriedly at the tranquil river flowing past his village in the Brazilian Amazon as he imagines the nightmare scenario of an oil spill being carried here by the tides.

His village, Manga, is located around 20 kilometers from the center of Oiapoque, a town bordering French Guiana that has been buzzing since Brazilian oil giant Petrobras began offshore exploration in the region a year ago.

The state-run company announced in August that it had identified signs of oil in a well about 175 kilometres off the coast of northern Brazil's Amapá state.

Leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is seeking reelection on October 4, promptly visited the area, calling the oil a "passport to the future."

Reaching Oiapoque requires travelling 600 kilometres from state capital Macapá, part of it along a red dirt road riddled with potholes. Makeshift wooden bridges are used to cross waterways.

Many streets in the town have no sidewalks, and are lined with low-rise buildings with run-down façades, although numerous construction projects are underway.

## 'Disappointed' with Lula

While many residents are excited about a potential oil bonanza in their poverty-stricken town, Karipuna is far from convinced.

"In the event of a spill, we will inevitably be affected. Water has no borders," said the 57-year-old chief.

He fears an "immense disaster" if an oil leak off the coast is carried into the Curipí River, which runs alongside his village of 1,800 inhabitants.

Petrobras has said its analyses do "not indicate the probability" of oil "reaching the coast in the event of a spill."

"There is no such thing as zero risk in offshore exploration," Jean



A man walks past a shop in Oiapoque, Amapá state, northern Brazil, on September 3, 2026. Caught between hopes of an economic boom and fears of an oil spill, the residents of the small town in the far north of Brazil, on the border with French Guiana, are closely following the oil exploration off the coast of the Amazon, a controversial project promoted by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is seeking reelection next month. – AFP

Paul Prates, who headed Petrobras in 2023-2024 and now chairs the energy and natural resources thinktank Cerne, told AFP.

"It is a low-probability risk, but with potentially high consequences."

Karipuna says he is "disappointed" with Lula, who presents himself as a defender of the environment and indigenous peoples.

Lula has said that while he is against fossil fuels, he believes the world cannot live without them yet, and that oil can finance the transition to clean energy.

Karipuna said he is already feeling the impact of oil exploration because of "the noise

from planes and helicopters," which he said scares away birds and game.

His concerns are shared by Joelso Mendonça, vice president of a group of nearly 400 traditional fishermen.

"If there is an oil spill, nobody is going to want to buy our fish," the 50-year-old said, while repairing his net in a stilted shack on the riverbank.

Petrobras told AFP it had "maintained continuous dialogue" with civil society and Indigenous communities.

Regarding air traffic, the company said it had made "adjustments" following consultations with indigenous leaders.

## 'Starting from scratch'

While some see the potential oil as a curse, Jacqueline Cadete considers it a "sign from God."

The 45-year-old evangelical pastor moved to Oiapoque at the end of 2025, attracted by oil "opportunities" after living abroad for many years in French Guiana and metropolitan France.

According to a study by the National Industry Observatory, more than 50,000 jobs could be created in Amapá.

And any royalty payments Petrobras will have to make once production begins could provide a considerable windfall for local authorities.

However, Petrobras president,

Magda Chambriard, announced in August that production was not expected to begin for another "six or seven years."

In the meantime, Mayor Inácio Monteiro Maciel is "very optimistic" about the future, even though the city will have to "practically start from scratch" in terms of infrastructure and social policies.

More than half of the roughly 28,000 inhabitants recorded in the town's 2022 census receive Bolsa Família, a benefit paid to Brazil's poorest households.

But the city has experienced an influx of newcomers in recent years, which has "intensified" since Petrobras began drilling, the mayor said.

He estimates that 40,000 to 45,000 people already live in Oiapoque.

## 'The new Dubai'

The mayor said that a rise in "real estate speculation" has pushed many families out of the city centre into new peripheral neighbourhoods, where conditions are often precarious.

In a neighbourhood called Nova Conquista ("New Conquest"), 32-year-old Thais Pereira de Souza lives in a tiny house with a corrugated metal roof, without water or electricity, alongside her husband, her two sons and her pregnant daughter-in-law.

They are crammed into a single room with two mattresses and two hammocks, after they were no longer able to afford their studio apartment in the city centre.

She expects "life to improve" thanks to the oil.

Lilma Campos, president of Oiapoque's Commercial and Industrial Association, anticipates a "radical change" but prefers to keep her feet on the ground.

"Just because oil has been found, some people think this will become the new Dubai, but we really don't know what's going to happen."

– AFP

## Football shorts



### Gutierrez guides Leverkusen past Leipzig in Bundesliga

BERLIN – Bayer Leverkusen defender Miguel Gutierrez scored a goal and set up another as they beat RB Leipzig 2-0 yesterday for their second win of the German Bundesliga season.

Left-back Gutierrez provided an assist for Czech Republic attacker Patrik Schick just before the break and scored himself after 57 minutes.

The 25-year-old Spaniard's contribution sent Leverkusen to fifth in the table as Schick took his tally for the season to four in as many matches.

"I could have scored two or three more goals," the in-form Schick told DAZN.

"Unfortunately, the international break is on its way," he added with Leverkusen's next game at Mainz on October 10.

Leipzig's second loss of the campaign leaves them in eighth before the two-week international window.

New boys Elversberg held Schalke 0-0.

Later struggling Paderborn, with just one point so far, entertain Hoffenheim.

On Saturday, Maximilian Beier's 70<sup>th</sup>-minute winner sealed Borussia Dortmund's 1-0 victory at Stuttgart as they moved top.

Dortmund are two points clear of second-placed Bayern Munich. The Bavarians hammered Union Berlin 7-0 on Friday as England captain Harry Kane became the fastest player to reach 100 Bundesliga goals.

Elsewhere, Hamburg notched their first goal, win and points of the season in a comfortable 2-1 home victory over Cologne. – AFP

### Ex-England ace Townsend run over by pitch roller in Thailand

BANGKOK – Former England international Andros Townsend was partially run over by a pitch roller in Thai football, but avoided serious injury in the bizarre incident.

The 35-year-old former Spurs winger was warming up for PT Prachuap's game at Pattani on Saturday when the driver lost control of the vehicle.

Townsend went down under the heavy roller, with the driver only stopping once the player's legs were trapped.

In footage which has since been widely shared online, Townsend attempts to push the roller off as the driver leaps out to help.

Townsend, who also played for Crystal Palace and Everton during an itinerant career, later made light of being run over.

"It turns out Stoke away wasn't so bad after all," he wrote on social media.

Townsend won 13 caps for England. – AFP

## Mourinho blames ref committee for Real Madrid derby defeat



MADRID – Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho lashed out at Spain's refereeing committee after Los Blancos lost 2-1 at Atletico Madrid yesterday in a La Liga derby clash.

Mourinho's team dropped to third, six points behind unbeaten leaders Barcelona as they stumbled at the Metropolitano stadium.

Madrid were unhappy about fouls by Cristian Romero and Lee Kang-in on Jude Bellingham and Federico Valverde in the first half, which Mourinho insisted should have been red cards.

Madrid were reduced to 10 men themselves early in the second half when Dean Huijsen fouled Giuliano Simeone to give away a penalty.

"We could skip the press conference because the story of the match is right here," Mourinho told reporters, clutching a printed piece of paper with images of the fouls he was unhappy about.

"They were two clear red cards."

Mourinho said referee Miguel Angel Ortiz Arias "could not handle the pressure" at the Metropolitano stadium and blamed Spain's refereeing committee, the CTA.

"The ones who should be really happy are the referee appointment committee, because everything was very strange," said Mourinho.

"They assign a referee who at 41 has never been an international (referee), so it's clearly not because he's a great referee."

Mourinho also said the match's VAR referee Daniel Jesus Trujillo has



Real Madrid's French forward Kylian Mbappe (right) vies for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Argentine forward Giuliano Simeone during the Spanish league match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Real Madrid CF at the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid yesterday.

– AFP

"history" with Madrid.

"This combination... a referee, poor referee, who has only done tiny little matches, and a VAR official with a big history... well, congratulations to the referee appointment committee," continued Mourinho.

The coach said he had "not seen" the incident for Huijsen's red card.

In February 2025, Madrid filed a formal complaint about Spanish refereeing to the Spanish football federation, labelling it "rigged" and "completely discredited".

The club's television channel

regularly attacks officiating in Spain.

Real Madrid created no chances of note in a dull first half against Atletico but Mourinho said he was happy with his players.

"They played a first half of great quality, of great personality," said the veteran Portuguese coach.

Mourinho said his team still had a good chance of winning the Spanish title if the refereeing was fair.

"If they leave us in peace and calm, if they let us compete on equal terms with everyone, there's still a long way to go," said Mourinho. – AFP

## Man City outgun Sunderland despite Brobbey hat-trick, Man Utd rescue Fulham draw

Kieran Canning



MANCHESTER – Manchester City went top of the Premier League despite Brian Brobbey's hat-trick in a 5-3 thriller yesterday as Matheus Cunha rescued Manchester United from another damaging defeat at Fulham.

City took advantage of Arsenal's shock 3-0 defeat at Brighton on Saturday but made life hard for themselves despite taking the lead three times at the Etihad Stadium.

Enzo Fernandez opened the scoring with his first goal since equalling the Premier League transfer record with a £125 million (US\$167 million) move from Chelsea.

The Argentine midfielder's free-kick caught out Robin Roefs at his near post.

Sunderland won their first European match for 53 years against AZ Alkmaar in midweek but showed little sign of tiredness as City could not shake off the Black Cats.

Brobbey slotted home Enzo Le Fee's pass for the first of his treble.

Quick feet and a slick finish from Rayan Cherki restored City's advantage, but Brobbey again replied within four minutes at the end of a fine Sunderland move.

Antoine Semenyo smashed City back in front before half-time and thought he had settled the game with another accurate left-footed finish just before the hour mark.

Brobbey completed his hat-trick after Nilson Angulo beat Gianluigi Donnarumma to a ball over the top.

A couple of nervy moments from the Italian goalkeeper nearly led to a Sunderland



Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker (centre) grabs the ball in front of goal during the English Premier League match against Bournemouth at the Vitality Stadium in Bournemouth, southern England yesterday.

– AFP

equaliser as Ruben Dias was forced to clear off his own line.

However, Erling Haaland finally got involved in the goalfest to seal the three points and ensured he has scored against every side he has faced in the Premier League.

Victory extends Enzo Maresca's perfect start to the daunting task of succeeding Pep Guardiola at City boss.

"To be honest, I prefer to win 1-0 than 5-3 but I expected a very difficult game," said Maresca.

### Calamitous own goal

United head into a three-week international break just two points outside the relegation zone as they failed to ease the pressure on manager Michael Carrick in a 1-1 draw.

But it could have been even worse for the Red Devils after a calamitous Lisandro Martinez own goal put Fulham on course for their first league win of the season.

Senne Lammens parried Calvin Bassey's strike back into the danger area and then could not clear when Martinez inadvertently

turned the ball towards his own goal.

Cunha's 89<sup>th</sup> minute equaliser also took a wicked deflection off David Affengruber to save United's blushes.

The Red Devils have taken just five points from their opening five games and were dumped out of the League Cup by Brighton in midweek after surrendering a 2-0 lead at home for the first time in 50 years.

A point is enough to edge Fulham off the foot of the table as Tottenham drop to the bottom.

### Iraola's winning return

Liverpool won 1-0 on Andoni Iraola's return to Bournemouth thanks to Alexander Isak's winner.

Iraola was given a warm reception after leading the Cherries into Europe for the first time in the club's history.

That success led to the Basque being snapped up by Liverpool but he has endured an up and down start at Anfield and needed a victory to ease tensions before the international break.

Liverpool's performance was again far from convincing but they got the only goal when Cody Gakpo's cross sat up for Isak to fire in his fourth of the season.

"To win here is very difficult, I know it very well," said Iraola. "Overall we've improved, definitely since the first games."

Victory moves Liverpool up to sixth and within a point of third-placed Brighton.

Leeds missed the chance to go third themselves after being held 0-0 at home by Crystal Palace. – AFP

# China storms opening day with golds, world record and swimming dominance

**Li Jia**  
NAGOYA – China made a strong start to the 2026 Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games yesterday, claiming its first gold medal in the women’s team modern pentathlon and setting a world record in shooting. Chinese swimmers were particularly dominant in the pool, winning six of the seven gold medals on offer and helping China finish the opening day with 11 gold medals.

China successfully defended its women’s team title in modern pentathlon to claim the delegation’s first gold medal at the Asiad. The team event is decided by the combined scores of each team’s top three finishers. China topped the women’s team standings with 4,318 points, powered by solid performances from Zhang Mingyu, Wu Xiyao and Meng Xin. Zhang and Wu also took silver and bronze, respectively, in the individual event.

Later in the day, China’s Li Liuchang won gold in the men’s individual event. The event marked modern pentathlon’s Asian Games debut in its new format, with the obstacle discipline replacing equestrian and offering a preview of the sport’s format for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Discussing the challenges she faced during the transition, Zhang said, “I had relatively little time to train for the obstacle event, so I had to put in extra effort. I’m also a little older than some of the other athletes, which can affect my physical condition.”

“But I want to keep moving forward and working hard to overcome these challenges. I believe they are only temporary, and I will continue to work hard,” she added.

China could have claimed its first gold earlier in the morning in the men’s individual triathlon, but favorite Zhang Xirui had to settle for silver as Japan’s Takumi Hojo won the first gold medal of the Games.

Zhang’s silver was China’s best-ever result in the men’s individual triathlon at the Asian Games.

China continued its strong start in the shooting events, winning the women’s 10-meter air rifle team title with a world-record score.

In the pool in Tokyo, Chinese swimmers, led by Olympic champions Pan Zhanle and Zhang Yufei, turned in a series of dominant performances on the opening day.



**Zhu Yu Ling of team Macao hits a return to Sun Yingsha of team China during the women’s team Group A table tennis match between China and Macao at the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Toyota, Japan, yesterday.**  
– Xinhua

13-year-old Yu Zidi made a winning Asian Games debut in the women’s 200-meter butterfly, taking gold in a Games-record 2:05.08 and claiming the first swimming gold medal of the Games. Yu had already gained international attention as the youngest swimmer to win a world championship medal, achieving the feat at the World Aquatics Championships last year at the age of 12.

The momentum continued as world record holder Pan Zhanle successfully defended his 100m freestyle title in 47.61 seconds, finishing ahead of South Korea’s Kim Young-beom and Hwang Sun-woo, who took silver and bronze, respectively.

Veteran backstroke specialist Xu Jiayu retained his 100m backstroke title in 51.98 seconds, while distance specialist Li Bingjie won the women’s 1,500m freestyle in 15:53.52.

In the sprint events, Tang Qianting successfully defended her women’s 50m breaststroke title, clocking 29.45 seconds to lower the Games record of 29.50 she had set just hours earlier.

China also won the women’s 4x100m freestyle relay, with Yu Yiting, Zhang Yufei, Cheng Yujie and Wu Qingfeng combining to claim another gold medal.

The only swimming gold China missed went to Japan in the men’s 200m individual medley. Tomoyuki Matsushita edged teammate Yumeki

Kojima to win the gold. China’s veteran Wang Shun took bronze.

China’s success continued on the wushu court, where Tong Xin retained her women’s taijiquan and taijijian all-around title. In the men’s events, athletes from Macao finished first and second in the changquan competition.

In table tennis, the tournament’s top Chinese players also got their campaigns underway, with Sun Yingsha and Wang Chuqin helping the women’s and men’s teams advance to the knockout stages as group winners.

China had a tougher time in the men’s team sports, with the football team playing to a 0-0 draw with Iran and the basketball team falling 79-70 to Iran to miss out on the bronze medal.

China head coach Guo Shiqiang attributed the basketball team’s struggles to fatigue and a lack of experience. “We have many young players who need more experience in big games,” Guo said. “The players were very tired in the last two games. We didn’t have enough players to rotate, so some had to play heavy minutes and became very tired.”

South Korea won the men’s basketball gold medal, beating Japan 67-57 in the final.

China led the medal standings with 11 gold, six silver and three bronze medals, followed by host Japan (6-7-7) in second and South Korea (4-3-7) in third.  
– Xinhua

| 20th Asian Games<br>Aichi-Nagoya 2026 |                                                                                                        |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |  |       |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Medal table                           |                                                                                                        |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |       |
|                                       |                                                                                                        |  |  |  | Total |
| 1                                     |  China              | 11                                                                                  | 6                                                                                   | 3                                                                                   | 20    |
| 2                                     |  Japan              | 6                                                                                   | 7                                                                                   | 7                                                                                   | 20    |
| 3                                     |  Republic of Korea  | 4                                                                                   | 3                                                                                   | 7                                                                                   | 14    |
| 4                                     |  Kazakhstan         | 3                                                                                   | 0                                                                                   | 2                                                                                   | 5     |
| 5                                     |  Thailand           | 3                                                                                   | 0                                                                                   | 0                                                                                   | 3     |
| 6                                     |  Myanmar            | 1                                                                                   | 1                                                                                   | 1                                                                                   | 3     |
| 7                                     |  Macao, China      | 1                                                                                   | 1                                                                                   | 0                                                                                   | 2     |
| 8                                     |  Kuwait           | 1                                                                                   | 0                                                                                   | 1                                                                                   | 2     |
| 9                                     |  Chinese Taipei   | 0                                                                                   | 2                                                                                   | 1                                                                                   | 3     |
| 10                                    |  Hong Kong, China | 0                                                                                   | 2                                                                                   | 0                                                                                   | 1     |

## Acosta takes 1st victory at Austrian MotoGP

### MotoGP

SPIELBERG, Austria – KTM’s Pedro Acosta chalked up his first ever victory in MotoGP when he won at the Red Bull Ring in Austria yesterday while Jorge Martin’s second place moved the Aprilia rider clear at the top of the championship standings.

Another Aprilia rider Marco Bezzecchi took third ahead of Ai Ogura (Trackhouse).

Ducati’s Marc Marquez, who went into this weekend joint level with Martin at the top of the standings, had to settle for fifth and is now 12 points behind his rival.

Acosta, who won both Moto3 and Moto2 championships before stepping up to MotoGP in 2024, started in third but found himself down in fifth at the end of the first lap.

It was only a temporary blip for the 22-year-old who was running second by the end of lap four and settling into a battle with Martin.

On lap nine, he swept past and settled into the lead. He was in a similar position in Saturday’s sprint before sliding off near the end but this time, after 15 podiums, he finally announced himself as a MotoGP winner.

“I mean, the first one is always special,” said Acosta who was especially pleased to take the win on the home track of KTM sponsor Red Bull.

“Nice way to close a cycle with KTM in front of all the Austrian fans,” he said.

“There were many KTM teachers around for this. Super happy for them, because they deserve it even more than me. The result was amazing.”

The playful Spaniard also managed to pay tribute to his crash on Saturday by laying his bike down on his winner’s lap on the spot where he had slid so uncomfortably into the gravel.

Martin, who benefitted from that crash on Saturday, crossed the line 1.017 seconds behind him.

Marc Marquez started second but on a track that did not suit his Ducati he had an up and down class of a ride.

Down to fifth on the opening lap, he moved up past Ogura on lap nine before an error that ran him off the track allowed the Japanese rider, KTM’s Brad Binder and Gresini’s Fermin Aldeguer all to pass.

In true Marquez style, though, the seven-time world champion battled back from seventh to minimise the damage to his hopes of an eighth title.  
– AFP

## Van der Poel sends worlds message with long-range victory

### Cycling

PARIS – Mathieu van der Poel warmed up for his bid for a second world title with a long-range solo break on the final stage of the Tour of Luxembourg yesterday.

The Dutch star broke clear just over a couple of kilometres into the 177km stage and held on in front all day to win by more than a minute.

The 2023 laureate will be one of the favourites next weekend for the World

Championships in Montreal, where reigning champion Tadej Pogacar will be missing due to injury.

“That was not the plan before the start, but I found myself alone from the start of the race in fact, and I just rode my tempo the whole day,” the 31-year-old said.

A six-man chase group closed to within 30-seconds of Van der Poel, but were caught themselves with 44km still to ride.

“At first I thought the chasers would

catch up to me, but I just continued to ride at my power and the gap grew out again, so at that point I decided to just go all-out until the finish,” Van der Poel added.

He has made a habit of launching long-range solo breaks this season, but never this far from the finish line.

It was one of the longest solo breaks in the history of cycling.

Italian Davide Piganzoli finished fourth on the stage to secure the overall victory.  
– AFP

## The Easter Island origins of buzzy Malkovich drama ‘Wild Horse Nine’

Paula Ramon

TORONTO – Seeking inspiration for his next project, Oscar-winning British-born Irish filmmaker Martin McDonagh travelled years ago to Easter Island.

The result is “Wild Horse Nine,” a dark comic drama set against the backdrop of political and social tensions in Chile in 1973.

US actors John Malkovich and Sam Rockwell, both long known for their memorably ominous characters, are joined by their US counterpart Steve Buscemi to star in the film that’s garnered standing ovations across the festival circuit, starting with its debut in Venice.

“Wild Horse Nine” follows two CIA colleagues grappling with personal circumstances that test their friendship, all while Chile lives out the final hours of Salvador Allende’s government ahead of a US-backed military coup.

Buscemi plays the CIA chief in Santiago, while Chilean actor Mariana di Girolamo, US actress Parker Posey and US actor Tom Waits round out the cast.

And it’s all set in the majestic, rugged landscapes of Easter Island.

There’s the beauty and mystery of the enigmatic “moai” stone statues carved by the Rapa Nui people, but also the terrain, the greenery and the ocean, McDonagh said.

“All of those beautiful aspects of Rapa Nui were fundamental to it being a character in the story,” he said during a press event at the Toronto Film Festival (TIFF) last week.

The director nabbed an Oscar in 2006 for his short film “Six Shooters,” and has earned six more Academy Award nominations for the films “In Bruges,” “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri,” and “The Banshees of Inisherin.”

His latest film sees jaded agents Chris (Malkovich) and Lee (Rockwell) discuss life, regrets, love, politics and...cheese.

“It’s very theatrical, the buddy movie, in a way,” Rockwell said, describing the characters as an “odd couple.”

The actor – who recently made a star cameo on the series “The White Lotus” – said that “even the way they fight, there’s a love in the way they fight.”

Malkovich agreed: “Their arguments are like a married couple.”

### Layered characters

Malkovich said audiences often respond well to shades of regret – “things they wish they had said or done or could say and do.”

“I think both these characters have a lot of those things.”

The 72-year-old, who won an award at the Venice Film Festival for his performance, said he enjoys playing such roles because “you get a lot of facets of someone.”

The duo in the film, for example, have no “problem with killing people.”

“That is in no way a moral issue to them,” Malkovich said. “Their moral issue is killing people while eating... That’s how they view the world.”

The personal drama of “Wild Horse Nine” unfolds during a turbulent chapter of Chilean history that intrigued McDonagh.

But the director did not want a didactic film.

“I love films that are entertaining,” McDonagh said. “This has a lot of, you know, deep political context to it, too – but I think you can do that.”

“Sometimes it’s easier to do that through a joke than through a diatribe.” – AFP



US actor John Malkovich poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the premiere of “Wild Horse Nine” during the 2026 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) at Princess of Wales Theatre last Monday in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The 11-day film-fest concluded yesterday. – AFP

## Ed Sheeran says Gaza situation ‘unjustifiable’ following row

Raphaëlle Peltier

PHILADELPHIA – Pop star Ed Sheeran said on Saturday the situation in Gaza is “unjustifiable,” following a wave of criticism that he had failed to back his opening act who was booted from the tour after making pro-Palestinian comments.

The 35-year-old English singer, who had previously maintained an apolitical stance, broke his silence on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in his first show since the controversy involving US rapper Macklemore.

“What is happening in Gaza is catastrophic and unjustifiable and disproportionate,” Sheeran said in Philadelphia.

“Our hearts have been broken by the scale of devastation and loss of civilians’ lives, children’s lives, and the systemic injustice we’re seeing unfold in the West Bank cannot be overlooked.”

Macklemore had declared “Free Palestine” at a New Jersey concert this month, drawing backlash from owners of US stadiums hosting future dates of Sheeran’s Loop Tour.

The British artist, 35, has denied being behind the decision to remove the rapper, instead blaming the tour promoter.

Four supporting acts subsequently walked out on the “Shape of You” singer, issuing public statements citing their support for Palestinians.

“I’ve had to take and make difficult decisions, and I am making mistakes, and I’m so so sorry,” an emotional Sheeran told his audience, who responded with cheers.

As the show was coming to an end, Sheeran said that this week had been the “hardest of my life” and that he had been afraid people would “throw things” at him.

Thanking the audience for their support, he called this show the “best night” of his life and shed some tears.

Sheeran had been accused by critics of failing to stand up to the stadium owners – led by billionaire businessman Robert Kraft – and was targeted by boycott calls.

The singer said he was “deeply worried” about the idea of venues



Fans arrive for English singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran’s concert at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on Saturday. – AFP

pre-approving the content of performances.

“This happens in so many places that I perform around the world, but it should never happen in the free world.”

### Boycott

A few dozen pro-Palestinian protesters rallied peacefully outside Lincoln Financial Field ahead of the concert, waving Palestinian flags and chanting “Free, free Palestine.”

Some of the fans streaming into the stadium said they had hesitated about coming due to the controversy, but ultimately decided to attend and enjoy the music.

“He could have easily walked away from all of this, and he stood up, and he spoke up,” said one fan after the show.

But others like Brandon Ateke changed their plans.

The 18-year-old Brown University student accused Sheeran of “complicity” with Kraft and others in silencing Macklemore.

“I decided to not attend the concert and instead attend the protest to bring light to the genocide going on in Gaza today,” he told AFP.

The stadium was close to capacity, despite an uptake in ticket resales this week and a sharp drop in prices.

On Saturday, a pro-Palestinian group urged artists, fans and crew members to stay away from Sheeran’s concerts.

“We now extend our call for boycotting Ed Sheeran’s entire world tour, including the upcoming Latin American dates, and the

as-yet-unannounced European leg,” the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) said.

### Alone on stage

Sheeran started his show Saturday night alone on stage, without an opening act.

He later brought on five musicians who he said had learned his songs in three days, thanking them for joining him “in a week when no one wants to stand on stage with me.”

The groups that quit the tour included Sheeran’s backing band as well as performer Finneas, who rose to fame collaborating with his pop superstar sister Billie Eilish.

Since Israel invaded Gaza in October 2023 following the worst attack on the country in its history by militant group Hamas, the toll on Palestinians and the wider issue of Palestinian rights have emerged as a rallying cry in the entertainment industry.

From the Oscars to the Emmys, top music awards ceremonies and European film festivals, the Gaza war has frequently pushed its way onto the agenda.

The massive Israeli offensive in Gaza has killed more than 73,800 people, according to the Gaza health ministry, which is under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

On Saturday, Gaza authorities said the latest Israeli fire had killed at least four people, including a 10-year-old girl. – AFP

## Brigitte Bardot widower slams sale of star’s belongings

NICE – The widower of French screen icon Brigitte Bardot on Saturday slammed as a “joke” the planned auction of hundreds of the late star’s personal belongings organised by her animal welfare foundation.

The sale, featuring more than 300 items ranging from portraits and toiletries to a flamenco guitar and a black tutu, is due to take place today at Paris auction house Drouot.

“These are personal items. Why hold this sale? For the animals? It’s a joke,” Bernard d’Ormale told AFP, adding it amounted to a “disrespect to Brigitte’s memory”.

“All of this could have been kept for the day when people are able to visit La Madrague,” he

added, referring to Bardot’s famed home in Saint-Tropez.

He said around three-quarters of the items came from Bardot’s Paris apartment, with the remainder from La Madrague.

Her belongings should have been preserved as part of her legacy rather than sold to raise funds for the foundation she created, d’Ormale argued, adding that Bardot “would not have agreed to this sale”.

The Brigitte Bardot Foundation rejected the criticism, saying the auction was approved by the board in June, including Bardot’s widower, who was then its president.

However, d’Ormale said he had not understood the auction would

involve such personal items.

The dispute comes days after he was removed as head of the foundation, a role he had held since the star’s death in December.

The 85-year-old, who remains on the foundation’s board, also complained he no longer has free access to La Madrague.

“I’ve lived there for 35 years and now they’re throwing me out. It’s quite something,” d’Ormale said.

Founded by the actor in 1986, the Brigitte Bardot Foundation says it has taken in 13,000 animals through four shelters and 150 partner facilities, supports 350 groups in France and operates in 70 countries. – AFP

### World Weather

| CHINA               | ASIA-PACIFIC           | WORLD                 | LUSOPHONE                |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Beijing 17°C~31°C   | Manila 24°C~32°C       | New York 16°C~22°C    | Lisbon 19°C~32°C         |
| Shanghai 20°C~30°C  | Bangkok 25°C~33°C      | London 13°C~22°C      | Rio de Janeiro 21°C~31°C |
| Hong Kong 23°C~30°C | Tokyo 23°C~25°C        | Frankfurt 8°C~20°C    | Luanda 19°C~23°C         |
| Taipei 20°C~31°C    | Singapore 26°C~33°C    | Vancouver 12°C~20°C   | Maputo 17°C~28°C         |
| Guangzhou 23°C~33°C | Kuala Lumpur 25°C~34°C | Paris 11°C~23°C       | Dili 21°C~31°C           |
| Nanjing 19°C~27°C   | Jakarta 24°C~34°C      | Moscow 11°C~21°C      | São Tomé 24°C~31°C       |
| Guilin 22°C~35°C    | Seoul 16°C~30°C        | Las Vegas 21°C~33°C   | Praia 24°C~31°C          |
| Xi'an 16°C~24°C     | Sydney 15°C~27°C       | Monte Carlo 20°C~28°C | Bissau 23°C~31°C         |



### 1. Not for crowded places

Models are prepared backstage before presenting creations from designer Ray Chu for their Spring/Summer 2027 collection on the second day of London Fashion Week, in London on Saturday. — AFP

### 2. Skittles on the tracks

The tram of the Turkey team from Istanbul competes during the 12<sup>th</sup> European Tram Driver Championship in front of Palace of Culture and Science on Marszalkowska street in central Warsaw, on Saturday. 26 teams – each consisting of a female and a male tram driver, from 25 cities and 24 European countries, plus one guest team from Melbourne, Australia – show off their driving skills in a series of challenging competitions that test their precision, concentration, feel for the vehicle, and control of the tram. — AFP

### 3. Best dressed

A horses carriage takes part in the costume parade of the Oktoberfest beer festival in Munich, southern Germany, yesterday. The world's biggest beer festival Oktoberfest runs until October 4. — AFP

### 4. Giant Van Gogh

This photograph shows a mural depicting Vincent van Gogh's iconic painting "Irises" installed by the Getty agency, a cultural and philanthropic organisation dedicated to the visual arts, in Paris on Thursday. — AFP

### 5. Confused chameleon

A chameleon is pictured during the 2026 Fall Canadian Pet Expo in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, on Saturday. Featuring a pet marketplace, pet competitions and more, the annual event ran in Mississauga from Saturday to yesterday. — Xinhua

### 6. Perfect message

An activist wears a "Make Earth Green Again" cap while taking part in the Climate Justice March in Seoul on Saturday. — AFP